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**Baba Yaga and Vasilisa:
Immersive Fairy Tales Created for and by Young Audiences**

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Baba Yaga and Vasilisa
Immersive Fairy Tales Created for and by Young Audiences

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Dedication

My thesis is dedicated to my beautiful collaborators who helped bring the fairy tale to life; Meredyth Pederson, Becca Drew Emmerich, Victoria Solorio, Michael Krauss, and E.L. Hohn. Thank you for your faith in this new collaborative creative process and your tireless work.

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Abstract

Baba Yaga and Vasilisa

Immersive Fairy Tales Created for and by Young Audiences

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This paper addresses how theatre design can be employed in elementary education and how theatre artists translate children's ideas and perceptions of fairy tales into professional theatrical designs. I explore how children visualize fairy tales and how their ideas can inform professional theatre designers. In order to accomplish this, I employed an inverted pedagogical system in which the children became the teachers from whom the adult artists learn. This system empowered the children to think deeply and explore the fairy tale rather than be dependent on adult perceptions. The fairy tale environment therefore, was established through child inspired and theatrically designed scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound. The process, as described above, culminated in the creation of a fairy tale performance in promenade style theatre, which invited the audience, be it a child or adult, to come onstage and experience the story along with the performer.

I, with the assistance of the Community Engagement Dramaturge Meredyth Pederson, conducted a residency at St. Francis School, Austin, TX in a first grade

classroom. We presented the Russian fairy tale *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Beautiful* and observed how the first graders perceived the story and visualized each design element: set, sound, costumes, and light. Each forty-five minute residency session with the first grade students focused upon a specific design discipline. After each residency session, Pederson and I reviewed the ideas and artifacts the first graders shared with us that day. The artifacts included drawings, recordings of conversations, soundscapes, photos of costumes, and their analysis of the story. We then shared this information with the adult theatrical environment design team. The design team discussed that which was identified by Meredyth and myself as important to the participating six or seven-year-old project collaborators' experience of the story. The adult design team then discussed how to transform their ideas into three-dimensional environmental design. The experience in the classroom did not drastically alter any of the professionals design processes but added another layer of research and ideas to the mix. The process was a positive introduction of young people into the world of design and professional story telling which encouraged and honored their ideas and interpretations of the story.

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Fairy Tales and Children's Input

VISUALIZATION OF FAIRY TALES

Fairy tales are a common part of the childhood experience throughout the world. Cultures derived from western European society are often made familiar with the German fairy tale collection, *The Brother's Grimm*, at an early age. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm use the tales to introduce their readers to a world that resembles an old world Germany, a place full of peasants, kings, untamed forests, and magic. The tales provide a beautiful and fascinating world where mysteries, adventures, and fairy godmothers exist. While I have always had a love for *The Brother's Grimm*, fairy and folk tales from other countries, particularly Russia and Norway, intrigue me. The storybooks I read from Russia and Norway are particularly magical with beautifully detailed illustrations. These tales take place in a similar world to *The Brother's Grimm* and many have related themes of leaving home, defeating evil, love, marriage, virtue, and obedience, which speak across cultures.

As a child, I was fascinated with the idea of stepping into the stories to experience the magical world. I wanted the tales to come to life. My childhood desire to tell and to make stories come alive is what inspired my professional practice of theatre and theatrical lighting design. Light tells a story through the creation and/or modification of an environment. Light is the tool I employ to establish the emotional and contextual world to of the story. I am able to cast shadows of leaves through the use of templates in lighting instruments to signify a forest. I can make the forest bright with cheerful colors if it is day and the story is hopeful or I can cast shadows and have the light at a low intensity to establish an eerie forest where witches and ogres may live.

As an adult, I still wish to inhabit both the physical and visual worlds of these stories. I believe the fairy tale worlds I imagine are probably very different from what a child would imagine. The difference between the adult and child imagination intrigues me. As an artist, I wish to explore stories with children so that I might see and hear how they visualize the fairy tale worlds. I am interested in the adventures and the experiences they desire to explore because I want to create theatre that authentically interests them at a professional artistic level.

INFLUENCES

In this study, I investigate how theatre design can be employed in elementary education and how theatre artists translate children's ideas and perceptions of fairy tales into professional theatrical design. While many educators accept the importance of the arts in elementary education, there is a lack of actual participation and experience of theatre. Arts are the last to come and the first to go (Dickinson). Dr. Kerry Freedman, Head of Art and Design Education at Northern Illinois University contends that art education is an important part of child development for it "teaches students how to interpret, criticize, and use visual information, and how to make choices based on it" (Lynch). Art education does not function in a vacuum but enhances other subjects and skills that children need, in particular writing. Ron Berger, a sixth grade teacher in an arts-integration school in Massachusetts found that the arts had "a profound effect on student understanding, investment, and standards...The arts are an incredible tool for 'ratcheting up' the quality of work and standards in a school. It shows in the discipline kids develop and in their academic achievement" (Dickinson). Arts integration in the

classroom is beneficial to the development of the entire student and is not frill. Arts are a part of the human experience and vital form of communication.

A number of professional regional theatre companies, for example The Zach Theatre in Austin, Lifeline Theatre in Chicago, Roundabout Theatre in New York, produce Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA), and many cities in the U.S. boast professional theatres solely focused on theatre for children. I am particularly interested in theatre companies who produce TYA via processes that include children throughout the whole of the design process. In my research, I identified three such working theatre companies whose work style and design elements fit within my aesthetic vision. They are Punchdrunk Theatre Company, Chiara Guidi and The Children's Theatre Experimental School, which she established with the Societas Raffaello Sanzio, and the Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company.

Punchdrunk Theatre Company, based in London, is well known for their adult work. I experienced their creative aesthetic style and their unique form of presenting theatrical performances through viewing the production, *The Masque of The Red Death*, which is a promenade production of a collection of Edgar Allen Poe's stories intended for adults. The audience actively moved through an experiential and transformable theatrical space in which every creative detail had been attended to. It was wonderful. I, as audience, felt as though I was inside Poe's imagination.

Punchdrunk Theatre Company, as part of their greater association, also operates an Enrichment Program. The program strives to bring out the innate imagination and creativity within people they work with ("Enrichment Introduction"). They focus the work on children, young people, and the wider community. In a notable production, *Under the Eiderdown*, Punchdrunk artists went into the classroom and explored the story with the students and teachers. They asked the kids what they would find in a bric-a-brac

shop and to become those objects through sound and the movement of their bodies. The adult artists incorporated the ideas and responses gathered in the workshop into the official design. Over the weekend, the artists created Mr. and Mrs. Weevil's bric-a-brac shop as an immersive story telling environment. They sent wax-sealed letters to the classrooms and invited the students into the space. The students then returned to their classrooms and wrote exceptionally imaginative stories with a higher level of vocabulary than is expected of their age group. The children were able to experience an environment that they had envisioned, enter into a story that they knew, and interact with the characters they were familiar with. Their ideas and vision of the story were honored and central to the theatre production. I find this way of working to be inspirational and speak directly to my desire for a child's imagination to bring a tale to life.

Punchdrunk does not always utilize the same model to create their unique enrichment work. Another inspiring production is *The House Where Winter Lives*. In this TYA performance the children were invited into Mr. and Mrs. Winter's cottage. They were then asked to find the key to the larder in order to make the Christmas cookies and give the story a happy ending. What I found so enjoyable about this performance is that the children were invited to actively participate in the story. Their imaginations were engaged through their direct interaction with the performers and their participation helped formulate the telling of the story. In *Under the Eiderdown* the young people created the world through design and story analysis, while in *The House Where Winter Lives* the young people helped to bring the world to life through their actions and participation in the performance ("The House Where Winter Lives"). This approach, which I've termed "immersive inclusion" allows the children to actively engage in the telling of a story. It is not a passive experience of watching a theatre performance but an involved one of creation, problem solving, and being a part of the tale.

Punchdrunk Theatre Company engaged the children in the overcoming of an obstacle, in the search for the key, in order to unlock the larder and complete the task. The theatre artist Chiara Guidi, a member of the Societas Raffaello Sanzio in Cesena, Italy, also engages children in tasks and challenges to conquer. In her production of *Bestione*, performed at the Puerilla Children's Theatre Festival in Cesena, a beast is imprisoned by an evil lord and the children are the only ones able to free him. The children are asked to play the hero themselves rather than watch or wait for a white knight to come to the rescue to provide a happy ending for the story. Therefore, they become integral to the story and performance. The young audience is empowered to take action, their imaginations are honored, and they are encouraged to solve the puzzle.

Guidi's work with children and the creation of theatre is also present in her school The Children's Theatre Experimental School, which she established with the Societas Raffaello Sanzio. The school is for children eight to ten years old and employs an inverted pedagogical system where the adults learn from the children as they manipulate the props, costumes, and stage space. The children choose their own progression through differently equipped rooms without the presence of parental guardians. The young people, though, are never alone; there is always a coach or an assistant. The activities give the children an opportunity to be playful and trigger their curiosity and imaginations. Guidi writes, "The young participants could 'play a game of war without killing anybody,' or 'suffer hunger but never be hungry.' 'With my theatre you could do all the things that don't exist,' because, pointedly she winks: 'theatre is to pretend to be someone who is doing things that are real'" ("A Childhood of Theatre"). She gives the children an imaginative playground and asks them to create and explore. What they do in the space is valuable to her and she uses it to create her theatre productions.

If adults lose themselves within analytical and fragmentary visions of the real, children have an aesthetic-symbolic perception that drives them to the substantial unity of things. This is the reason why the theatre can still become the staging of sensations and emotions that words can't express for the children yet. A fairy tale becomes the playground we enter into, paying particular attention to the sounds of individual words and the sonority emanating from the narrative line, and as we children, meaning both children and adults, play, we are guided towards a sensory vision that favors emotion over reason. The aim would be to discover the sounds and the noises produced by the objects surrounding us, to accompany and to emphasise all the dramatic weight of the story, right up until the final catharsis. ("Jack and the Beanstalk: Meet the Artists")

Therefore, we need the children's ability to play with and interpret the space and objects to create a unified story that celebrates their imagination. In their ludic play, children create a unified world full of objects that are symbols and substitutions for other items. A piece of paper can symbolize a cake and the participants of the game understand this semiotic choice. They are not fooled into believing that the paper has been transformed into a piece of cake. The function of this ludic or symbolic play as summarized by Mary Ann Spencer Pulaski is to " 'assimilate reality to the ego, while freeing the ego from the demands of accommodation'" (88). The child does not have to imitate and accommodate objects to reality but rather can distort to objects to suit their fancy. Children give unity to their imaginary vision and are able to invite adults into that world. Adults can be too focused on details and realism, a naturalistic aesthetic, which is not always as important to children or the world of the fairy tale. Imaginative play is also a place where children, who are developing the language skills, can express themselves. Art and imagination become an expression of oneself when words are at a loss. This approach of inverted pedagogy honors and strives to learn from the child's imagination. Here, children become the teachers whom the adult artists must learn from. It is a form of art that can empower young audiences to trust their instincts and asks them to think deeply rather than to rely on adult instructions.

Another inspirational production created by Chiara Guidi was *Buchettino, Tom Thumb* by Charles Perrault. In *Buchettino*, Guidi filled the room with small wooden beds and invited the children to sit on the beds and under the sheets. The storyteller came into the space in costume and told the children the story. As she went through her performance, a storm raged outside and banged on the walls. The cozy beds would vibrate and shake. One could hear the squeak of the door, rustle of leaves in the forest, and the crunch of pebbles. The incorporation of design elements of light and sound enhanced the children's experience of the performance. The scenic and costume designs were simple and did not include location or character changes. Instead she relied on the children's imaginations and the power of soundscape to trigger sensations ("Buchettino"). Emotion was favored over reason in this production that asked the audience to experience the story and not watch the actors move around the stage. This form of performance highlights the child's imagination and ability to conjure up a world from the environmental cues of sound and light. It is a form of art that celebrates the irrational and primal fears of our imagination that children are more susceptible to than adults.

The Trusty Sidekick Theatre Company, based in New York, is another company that places high importance on children's innovative imagination. The company creates devised new work through engagement with their target audience. A team of multidisciplinary artists comprised of physical theatre, puppetry, music, dance, animation, and video projection, among others, enter into a classroom together without a script and with the goal to create a new devised piece. In order to devise the new work, the team begins with a spark question that activates the imagination of all those present, be they young people or adults. The show is developed through workshops in which the children and the artistic team collaborate to generate new ideas and inspire each other. In

this initial research and development phase, they discover what is of interest to their target audience and begin to form the story. The story they tell is utterly flexible and is devised through the workshops; they do not tell a story from a script or borrow a fairy tale. The adult artistic team uses the ideas formed in the classroom with young people to write an original script. They then return to the classroom and test out their ideas and offer design options. Once they have gaged the reaction of their target audience with this second classroom workshop, they finalize the performance into a professionally designed and presented theatrical show (“Trusty Sidekick Theater for the Very Young”). Jonathan Schmidt Chapman, the Trusty Sidekicks artistic director, explained, “All of our work experiments with new ways for young audiences to interact with live performance, taking advantage of the fact that kids have no preconceived idea of what theatre should be” (“A Test in Following Directions: Trusty Sidekick Presents Immersive Pieces at Park Ave. Armory”). Their performances consist of interactive environments and give children the opportunity to participate in the creation of the story. They present theatre that honors design elements and children’s ideas rather than TYA that is created by adults without consultation of young people. The Trusty Sidekicks give children the opportunity to work on and experience theatre at a professional level. What the children value is embraced by the adult artists and the children are able to become designers and playwrights at the same time. This approach allows the children to be integral part of the development of the theatrical piece that incorporates their ideas.

THE PROJECT

In my work, I am interested in how children’s ideas about story and storytelling can be gathered and translated into a professional theatre design. I decided to stage an

established fairy tale, the Russian story *Vasilisa the Beautiful* with the belief that it would have broad appeal since it has elements of interest that cross age and gender lines. It is a Cinderella story in which the heroine must overcome magical challenges in order to find her own family and happiness. What sets it apart from other fairy tales and makes it interesting to different ages and genders is the hint of fear and mystery from the forest to the talking skull to the three knights as well as the fact that the heroine saves herself.

In this endeavor, I partnered with Meredyth Pederson who is a community engagement dramaturge from the Drama and Theatre for Youth and Communities (DTYC) program at the University of Texas. She is an experienced teaching artist who is interested in the creation of original pieces with and for young people. Our collaboration was beneficial to both of us since she was able to facilitate the lessons that focused on design-based dramaturgy and I was able to focus on the children's design ideas. It was important to both Pederson and myself that the children be treated as experts, for they are the ones who know what it is to be a child and what children want to see.

For this project, Pederson and I chose to incorporate the Trusty Sidekick's theatre creation model for it embraces the ideas of young people and the importance of collaboration with adult theatre artists. We changed their model slightly since we decided to produce an already established story rather than devise our own. In this way, our model was closer to Punchdrunk's as we work-shopped the story in the classroom and then brought their ideas to life in the theatre. All three influential models, Trusty Sidekicks, Punchdrunk, and Chiara Guidi, gather the children's ideas in workshops and then have the adult artists create a production that honors the original ideas.

I too believe that children should have a voice in TYA and I am excited to join in the presence of companies from around the world who embrace the innate imagination of children to create pieces of theatre.

ADULT PRODUCTION TEAM

Children, though highly imaginative, are not experts on how to design for theatre or how to produce a fully realized production. Therefore, I assembled an adult production team of Master of Fine Arts candidates in Theatrical Design at The University of Texas to help transform the ideas collected from the residency workshops with the first graders into a formal design. Michael Krauss joined this venture as the scenic designer and E. L. Hohn joined for costume design. In this design process, the children's ideas will serve as research data to be reflected on and to influence the design. They will combine the children's ideas with their own professional expertise in order to create professional designs. I serve as the generative artist who maintains a cohesive vision for the whole of the project and focuses my design skills towards the creation of the light and sound environments.

Pederson and I approached Becca Drew Emmerich, an M.F.A. candidate in the DTYC program, to be the storyteller. I wanted a single performer who would tell the narrative and allow the theatrical design elements to enhance her performance of the story. In order to keep our many elements organized; we brought in Victoria Solorio, a fourth year undergraduate theatre major with a focus in stage management, as our stage manager. Pederson and I chose to co-direct the project according to our strengths and that I would write the narrative. I, as generative artist, am responsible for making sure all voices contribute properly to the overall vision.

The Residency

YOUNG COLLABORATORS & THE PLOT

Pederson and I chose to work in a first grade classroom because we wanted students who had the capacity to appreciate the complexity of a fairy tale, participate in analysis, social activities, and games with rules while immersed in the imaginative magic of the story. In first grade, children are in the concrete operation phase of development, according to the work of the psychologist Jean Piaget (Pulaski 28).

Piaget was a Swiss psychologist who studied human cognitive development and wrote extensively about his findings. His books were first translated into English in the 1920s and he worked until his death in 1980. Piaget broke child cognitive development into four main periods of growth: sensory-motor period, preoperational stage, the concrete operational stage, and the formal operations stage. In the sensory-motor period (0-2years) the child learns about the world through his/her senses and actions (Pulaski 27). The next period is preoperational (2-6 or 7), in which the child begins to understand the world on a symbolic level. The symbols he/she uses include mental images, drawings, dreams, gestures, and language (Pulaski 28). In this period of development, the child is egocentric for the known world is limited to his/her personal experience. The next phase of development is the concrete operational phase (7-11 or 12years) in which the child is able to classify concrete objects or their representations (pictures or words) into categories and groups of hierarchic or sequential relationships. He/she can perform basic mathematical operations and reason logically but is limited to his/her own experience and cannot think in the abstract (Pulaski 55). The final period of development is the formal operations stage (11-15years) in which the child is able to think in the concrete and in the abstract (Pulaski 30).

In the concrete operational period, the child moves away from the practice games of the sensory-motor period, pitching pebbles, jumping rope, stringing beads and towards symbolic games and games with rules, such as hopscotch or marbles. Games with rules are social games that contrast with the previous egocentrism of the child. Symbolic games “‘imply representation of an absent object’ and are both imitative and imaginative” (Pulaski 85). The games symbolize the child’s own feelings and interests and therefore help him/her express him/herself creatively. Symbolic or ludic play is a necessary step in the development of adaptive intelligence. As the child moves closer to operational thought, the symbolic games accommodate reality to a greater extent, the games are more orderly and less egocentric, and the play is increasingly social. Play becomes a replica of reality and there is increased attention to exact detail. As the child moves further towards operational thought, the symbolic games are replaced by games with rules and daydreaming (Pulaski 85).

The first grade class, Pederson and I worked with displayed an active interest in ludic or symbolic play. Magic is fun for them even though they have begun to understand that it is not real. The students also displayed an increased interest in social activities and games with rules as their development moves closer to the operational stage. Pederson and I were able to utilize both their ludic play and their interest in games with rules as we analyzed the story and gathered design ideas from them.

The opening plot of *Vasilisa the Beautiful* is that of *Cinderella* in which the merchant marries a cruel stepmother who treats his daughter, Vasilisa, as a servant. An early twist in the story is that Vasilisa’s mother makes her a magic doll who comforts the girl before she passes away. One night, the stepmother lights a single candle and gives her daughters and Vasilisa tasks to complete. One of the girls blows out the candle but no one is able to light another match since the stepmother cast a spell on the house. The

stepmother, as was her plan, sends Vasilisa into the forest to get light from their neighbor, Baba Yaga. Baba Yaga is an ancient creature that lives in a house on chicken legs and loves to eat people. As Vasilisa walks through the forest she sees three knights, one is white and brings the dawn, the second is red and is followed by the day, and the last one is black and proceeds the night. When she reaches Baba Yaga's house, the creature tells her that she must cook, clean, and complete impossible tasks to obtain her light and if she fails she will be eaten. Vasilisa's doll helps her complete the tasks and Baba Yaga grants her the light in the form of a burning skull from her fence. The young woman returns to her stepfamily and the skull burns them. She then takes shelter with a kind widow. To show her gratitude, she weaves a beautiful piece of cloth and presents it as a gift. The kind old widow gives it to the Tzar who wants to meet the artist who wove such magnificent fabric. He falls in love with Vasilisa and the two of them marry and live happily ever after. (See appendix for the full narrative). I believe that this story is good for this age group because it contains a hint of fear, a heroine who must overcome magical obstacles, and a happy ending.

Through DTYC, Pederson and I connected with Mr. John Wright, who teaches first grade at St. Francis Elementary School in Austin. He invited us into his classroom for six weeks to conduct a series of workshops with his students on the topic of theatrical design.

SESSION 1: OVERVIEW

Our residency began on September 26, 2014, a few weeks into the academic year, which allowed Mr. Wright time to establish a positive and supportive classroom environment prior to our arrival. The first session included a presentation of the project

overview and the completion of necessary paperwork. (See appendix for Workshop Plan #1 for the lesson plan). Pederson and I explained that we would visit each week for the next month to discuss the story with the class, gain insight to their ideas about the story and to the places, people, and events that exist within the story, and lastly, to develop a staged performance that incorporated their ideas about the tale. In the initial session, I observed the classroom space that Mr. Wright had created and began to get to know the young collaborators. After introductions, we turned our attention to artistic pursuits in order to learn about the children and engage them in our process. I first asked the youth to draw a forest, any type of forest they desired, and to title it. As the children drew their forests, Pederson went around and gained their verbal consent, we already had written parental consent, to use their artwork and to write about what they said. As part of this consent, the children could change their name and five out of seventeen took this option. Only one child declined to participate.

The drawings the children produced at our first session depicted the different personalities present in the classroom. Different categories of forest drawings we received included animals, magic, and monsters. From one student, Sravya, we had a colorful Animal Forest and Harlucha gave us the Flower and Bird Forest. Lily drew The Fairy Princess Forest with an overwhelming amount of purple and Isabel created The Magic Forest utterly unrestricted in her use of color. Her tree is purple with yellow, red, and purple leaves while a green squirrel lives in it. The unicorn is a mixture of red, green, and purple standing on red grass. Ruby drew The Monster Forest and scribbled all over the paper with colored pencils, while Harlan and Jackson both drew The Zombie Forest. They sat at separate tables, but Mr. Wright informed me after class that they are friends and that zombies are their latest interest. The class, primarily the boys, used red scribbles in their drawings to represent blood. The exercise allowed us to gather information about

what our young collaborators were interested in, animals, magic, and zombies were a few of the predominate themes. It also provided a safe activity in which their ideas were respected and talked about with interest.



Illustration 1: The Animal Forest and The Magic Forest by Sravya and Isabel

SESSION TWO: THE STORY

Pederson and I returned a few days later to tell the story. (The lesson plan is found in the appendix under Workshop Plan #2). We began this session, and every session after it, with a check-in. The check-in is an activity practiced by DTYC, which allows people to observe how their collaborators feel and therefore be conscientious of each other's emotional states. One expresses how one feels with a thumb up, down, or in between and then looks around the room and gauges how everyone else is doing. The first graders

participated enthusiastically, though vocally. After this community building activity we shared the story.

I chose *Vasilisa the Beautiful* for a number of reasons. As mentioned previously, it has elements that cross gender and age lines. In addition, I wanted a story that was slightly scary and allowed the children to be frightened and to conquer their fear. I have always loved fairy tales, the traditional versions of which do not stray away from the horrors and hardships of life. As James Garbarino and Francis M. Scott write in *What Children Can Tell Us*, “Fairy tales do not avoid the difficult. Rather, they give children the message that meeting challenges head-on is the way to overcome hardship and to be victorious” (162). A “boogey man” can be beneficial to children for through the story the child can defeat the boogey man, identify with the hero, and create a happy ending. In the stories children tell, they do not shy away from the difficult or unpleasant and therefore it did not make sense to me to choose a story that lacks a boogey man and a little dose of fear (Garbarino and Scott 162). *Vasilisa the Beautiful* clearly has portions of fear, but also a wedding that gives the story a happy ending and makes the tale easily comprehensible and ultimately comforting for children.

Another reason I chose the story is that it has an empowered heroine who does not need a prince to rescue her. She is able to save herself with the help of her magical doll. The message of hard work, independence, and love truly resonated with me as a child and made the story remain important into my adulthood. The version I grew up with is actually a modern retelling by Marianna Mayer entitled *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave*. Her version only differs slightly from the traditional Russian version, but it does place emphasis on the feminist aspects of a woman saving herself and lessens the importance of beauty and marriage present in the traditional Cinderella story.

I decided not to use a particular account of the tale, but rather write my own version designed to be spoken out loud. (The narrative is found in the appendix). I read traditional versions and modern retellings, including Norbert Guterman's translation of Aleksandr Afanas'ev's found in his collection entitled, *Russian Fairy Tales*, Rita Grauer's retelling titled *Vasalisa and her Magic Doll*, and the title story from the collection, *Vasilisa the Beautiful: Russian Fairy Tales* translated and edited by Irina Zheleznova. My narrative remained predominantly traditional as my love is for the old Russian fairy tales, but I took a cue from Mayer and made the story more about Vasilisa's journey and her inherent strengths. Therefore I cut out any mention of beauty, yet did not alter the basic premises of the tale. I retitled my narrative *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa* in order to place emphasis on the Russian boogey man rather than on Vasilisa's appearance. Though I dispersed with mentions of beauty, I did retain the marriage at the end because I did not want to alter the traditional story too much by divorcing it from its conclusion. The marriage also comes after Vasilisa has saved herself from both Baba Yaga and her stepfamily and so while hegemonic, I do not believe that it takes away from her as a self-saving princess. Lastly, I found the core of the story to be Vasilisa's search for a family. While the widow gives her a mother's love that she has lacked, the marriage to the Tzar grows her family.

Pederson told the story from my narrative and did not show illustrations, as we did not want to influence our young collaborators' imaginations. The doll fascinated them, Baba Yaga was fun with a touch of fear, and they loved her weird house and talking skull. Hohn commented on my choice of story for the first graders, "It's all this sort of weird stuff that's not in a Disney movie, it's not been de-fanged for them. It's this very weird story in a way that's really appealing to that age group in particular where they're just starting to push the boundaries of what they're comfortable with" (Hohn).

Vasilisa the Beautiful is a unique narrative whose qualities helped to spark the children's imaginations. Unlike modern fairy tales, there is unapologetic horror. The talking skull burns the stepfamily alive, granting punishment more severe and brutal than what is dealt out to antagonists in modern stories. Vasilisa saves herself from her wicked stepmother through her personal strength, hard work, and a magic doll but without the help of a prince or any man. These qualities distinguish her from the princesses who need a prince to save them; Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, and Cinderella to name a few. What is most intriguingly unique to me is that Baba Yaga serves as the boogeyman who threatens to eat the heroine but then upholds her side of the bargain and sets Vasilisa free. She not only lets her go with her life, but gives her what she came for and punishes her wicked stepfamily. The witchlike creator becomes the fairy godmother.

Not all of the children were engaged the entire time. Lily was an interesting case, as she did not appear interested until we reached the end when Vasilisa marries the Tzar. At this moment she snapped to attention and was utterly engaged. Mr. Wright told Pederson and me after class that Lily is one of his students who is interested in princesses. She was the girl in the first session that drew The Fairy Princess Forest. Lily and her classmates' enjoyment of the tale as a whole confirmed my belief that this was the engaging tale for their age group.

Pederson and I then asked the first graders to draw the moment they remembered most. This moment could be their favorite part, a character, or a picture they created in their head as they listened to the story. The class was almost perfectly split between Baba Yaga's house on chicken legs and the three knights who ride across the sky to bring the different times of day. A challenge our young collaborators faced with the knights was how to represent the white one on white paper. Later on in the performance process, black would become a challenge since I chose to project the image of the knights with

lighting instruments. The first graders met the challenge of a white knight in a variety of ways. Kaylen and Smithson chose to draw him with yellow crayons and markers. The logic behind this choice is clear since the white knight brings the dawn, the first moments of the sun peaking above the horizon when the sun is yellow. It also contrasts with the red knight who represents the red-hot sun of day. Connor and Laila chose to use a gray crayon since it is the closest to white and has the lighter elements of the dawn sky. Harlucha, Jackson, and Isabel avoided coloring in the white knight and simply drew an outline. Our young collaborators' inventiveness with their depictions of the knights provided different ideas about how to represent them on stage and what their color means in reference to the sun and time of day. The students took the challenge and thought about what time of day each knight represents and what color best exemplifies this.



Illustration 2: The Knights by Smithson, Laila, and Isabel

It can be argued that their imaginations were especially sparked by the story's description of Baba Yaga's house. Their representations of her house all differed, though each contained the magical elements of chicken legs and a bone fence. In Harlucha's

imagination, Baba Yaga lives in a pink high rise. She was not tied down by conventional houses that one sees in Austin or by any knowledge she might possess of Russian cottages; instead she had a completely different interpretation that is reminiscent of the tower the German witch locks Rapunzel in. Little Foot and Harlan both decided that for a house to be on chicken feet it must have many pairs rather than the two specified in the story. Twohey also gave Baba Yaga's house many feet but he chose for them to be human feet rather than chicken ones. Sravya's picture is as bright and colorful as her forest drawing. Vasilisa has purple hair and her red skirt has a pocket for her doll. She stands by Baba Yaga's house colored in a bright yellow with a pair of red boots for feet. There is smoke emitting from the chimney which causes me to think about all of the food Vasilisa cooks for Baba Yaga throughout the tale. The presence of feet and skulls in each drawing emphasized that this is a key element of who Baba Yaga is and where she lives for our young collaborators. They are as key to the story and character of the witch as the candy and gingerbread that constitute the witch's house in Hansel and Gretel. The question then becomes how many feet does the house have and what shape are the feet and bones?



Illustration 3: Baba Yaga's House by Harlucha and Little Foot

Harlan and Ruby were both interested in who Baba Yaga is. There is no clear answer to this question. A number of her actions resemble that of a witch in western European fairy tales, but in Russian literature she is not classified as a witch. Unlike the witch in Hansel and Gretel, Baba Yaga makes a bargain with the heroine and sets her free when she succeeds. Baba Yaga is featured in a number of Russian fairy tales where the size of her role and what it is varies. At times she is the kind donor, the person who helps the hero, while in others she is the antagonist. Her nature is ambiguous, opposed to the purely evil western European witch. She is typically helpful to young women, while she tends to be more ferocious around and interested in eating little boys.

Andreas Johns contemplates the origin of her name and character in his text, *Baba Yaga: The Ambiguous Mother and Witch of Russian Folktale* along with what she represents in Russian folk history. He writes that “baba” can be found in all Slavic languages to mean grandmother. In old Russian, “baba” refers to a midwife, sorceress, or fortune teller while the modern Russian word for grandmother, babushka, is derived from it (9). And so it is understandable that Vasilisa addresses Baba Yaga as grandmother in the tale. The meaning of “yaga” is much more obscure with related words in a variety of Slavic and Indo-European languages with meanings from illness to evil woman to lazy (Johns 10). Along with her name, scholars have speculated over her character’s origin in Russian folklore. Mikhail Chulkov identified her as the Slavic pagan underworld goddess, Iagaia baba, who sits on an iron mortar with an iron pestle (Johns 16). The nineteenth-century mythologist, Aleksandr Afanas’ev, one of the first to compile a collection of Russian folklore like the Brother’s Grimm, interpreted Baba Yaga as the personification of a storm cloud. “Her mortar and mobile hut are metaphors of the storm cloud, and her staff or crutch is, like the club of Perun, the Slavic thunder god, a metaphor for lightening” (Johns 16-17). The linguist Aleksandr A. Potebnia associated

Baba Yaga with the Germanic figures Holda who causes snow and rain, keeps the souls of unborn children and receives the souls of deceased children, is associated with cloth and spinning, and rewards good spinners while punishing the bad ones (Johns 18). In these three interpretations Baba Yaga becomes a mythical figure that is close to a pagan goddess associated with nature. Scholars cannot agree on how she came into being or what exactly her true nature is, though she seems well titled as the ‘winter witch’ in the Russian folk song that is meant to ensure the arrival of spring (John 20). Ruby’s specific question was “Is she a monster or a woman?” Upon asking her what she thought, she proceeded to give the woman monster claws in her drawing. Ruby’s Baba Yaga is a combination of elements that highlight her dual nature. Harlan’s answer was utterly different. He responded to the ambiguity by drawing her as a robot.



Illustration 4: Baba Yaga and her House by Harlan and Ruby

The scene when the skull burns the stepfamily was of interest to all of our young collaborators. As frightening as Baba Yaga can be, the burning scene is truly the moment of pure horror in the tale. In this exercise, only Jackson and Lily chose to draw the

flaming skull and the burning of the stepfamily. Jackson's drawing was full of death and destruction with flames coming out of the skull's eyes and figures burning on the ground. The princess-loving Lily's burning scene was less explicit. Vasilisa and the doll stood unharmed surrounded by piles of black ash. It can be argued that the fascination the first graders felt with the flaming skull was due to their own fears of ones own family and house being consumed by flames. These drawings pointed to the importance of the flaming skull and also of the difficulty one encounters with fire on stage. It is a moment that needed to be contemplated by the adult design team in order to figure out how to best serve our young collaborator's imaginations.

The drawing exercise revealed the moments that we needed to emphasize and not gloss over in the performance. It also gave us creative ideas about how these moments work in the narrative. For example, as our young collaborators had shown us, I can employ variations of colors for the knights. We can have many legs on Baba Yaga's house and they do not have to look like chicken legs. Perhaps they are wearing boots. We cannot lose the horror of the burning scene, but we do not have to be explicit about what happens.



Illustration 5: Production Photo by Briana Bower

SESSION THREE: SOUND AND SET

Our third session dove further into the environment of the story and investigated the design disciplines of set and sound. (See appendix for Workshop Plan #3). We began the session with an interactive and collaborative activity where the first graders constructed Baba Yaga's house with their bodies. They were given a minute to think about what part of the house to be. Pederson called on the kids in turn and each was to recognize what their colleagues had done and build off of it. This activity was difficult for our young collaborators. They were aware of their own personal ideas and what their body represented but could not always recognize what their colleagues' bodies symbolized or how to build off of one another. At the beginning of first grade, when some students are still six-years-old, they are starting to move from solitary ludic play to social games with rules, and so at times these types of activities can prove a challenge. They previously have functioned within their own imagination and interpretation of the world. It is at this age that they start to play games with rules in which they must share their imaginations and learn their peers' unique views.

Pederson and I decided to turn our focused attention away from scenic design upon witnessing their difficulties with the previous exercise. Instead, we turned our concentration to sound and the soundscape hallway. We asked the first graders to sit on the rug in two lines facing each other. Then we brainstormed about sounds Vasilisa might hear in the forest as she travels to Baba Yaga's house. Our young collaborators came up with owls, wolves, wind, bats flapping their wings, and a monkey howling, to name a few. We questioned why a howling monkey would be in a Russian forest, but as it was important to the student we did not curtail his imagination and welcomed the foreign monkey. Pederson then explained the rules of the game, namely that when she taps the

player on the shoulder the player will make the sound they chose. While we wanted a lot of different sounds, it was fine if players chose the same sounds. When Pederson taped the player on the shoulder a second time the sound would stop. After we had established how the game is played and did a practice run, we had a student walk between the lines, hear the sounds, and imagine that they are in the forest on route to Baba Yaga's house. Afterwards, the student told us what their experience was like. Sravya and our other participants informed us that they were delightfully scared. They found the sound environment sufficiently creepy, but not so horrifying that their imaginations made it unbearable. During this session, I recorded the soundscapes the first grade class created in order to capture their idea of a forest and to use the recording in the actual performance in order to establish the location.

One interesting problematic sound a student brought to our forest was a crying baby. This appeared to be an inside joke with a few of the boys in the class. When we asked why a crying baby is in the forest, Ivy replied that since Baba Yaga likes to eat children, maybe she found a baby and is going to eat her. Ivy's comments show the depth of her comprehension of the story. She was able to create a backstory to justify the sounds her collaborators chose. A designer must have dramaturgical research to support each decision and Ivy was able to grasp this and create a reason for an unusual choice.

SESSION FOUR: COSTUMES

One of our most exciting and productive design days was when our costume artist, E. L. Hohn, joined the classroom and brought with her a bundle of clothing options. (See appendix Workshop Plan #4 for lesson plan). Before she pulled the items from costume stock to bring to the classroom, we talked about the fairy tale/story-book

aesthetic that hints towards a Middle Ages and European Renaissance fashions. Hohn also asked about the colors the children used in their drawings in order to bring items that would follow their aesthetic choices. She used their drawings as research to determine the predominate colors of the fairy tale world. The colors they chose were rich and deep shades of purple and red. I appreciated that they stayed away from princess pink and chose shades associated with action and strength. Hohn's decision to limit the items pulled to the colors our young collaborators had used, was a way to incorporate their conception of the world into the costume design.

Pederson began our fourth session with the activity Role on the Wall. She drew the outline of a person on the board and then asked the first graders to brainstorm important things about Vasilisa. Who are the people in her life? What do people in her life say about her? All of these suggestions were written outside of the figure. She then asked how Vasilisa feels on the inside. Our young collaborators easily made connections between the people and events in Vasilisa's life and her reactions. Their vocabulary was an encouragement since it showed their grasp of the story, their engagement with the project, and their lack of fear of descriptive language. They even played with the English language. Laia came up with the word "undelighted" when it best suited her purpose. The analysis exercise let them listen to each other's ideas and interpretations of Vasilisa and share their own. Character analysis is the place where a costume designer starts in clothing a character and so the activity treated the first graders with the same inclusive respect as one would treat an expert professional designer.

In order to consolidate the costume design process and access their imaginations without the influence of illustrations, we decided to choose articles of clothing and dress up as Baba Yaga and Vasilisa as the next step. This step combined symbolic play and how the characters look in their personal imagination, with intellectual and artistic

creativity. Since the first graders had analyzed Vasilisa, they had an intellectual comprehension of her character. They then needed to apply their creativity to her costume. They merged the image they developed of the character with her personality traits and the previously discussed circumstances.

We began with Vasilisa, as she is the main character and the subject of our analysis. Hohn held up each article of clothing and our young collaborators voted on them. When a student voted for an item of clothing he or she also had to give a reason. The students had gut instincts that aligned with Hohn and my instincts as professional theatre artists, but it was difficult for them to articulate why this was the correct choice. This was no surprise given their developmental stage. Hohn then put on the article of clothing that received the most votes.

The first grade class initially chose to dress Vasilisa in a pink blouse and a shimmery long red skirt. Lily objected to the pink blouse since she preferred the ones with flowers, as girls wear flowers and it's pretty. Hohn next asked the class to choose between a red or a black vest. The class was split between the two and so she offered to put the red vest on first. The class looked at Vasilisa dressed all in reds and pinks and was overwhelmed by their color choices. They recognized that there was too much red and they needed a distinctive color to break it all up. Therefore, they asked Hohn put on the black vest and gave Vasilisa two ribbons to tie around her waist; one was green with gold embroidery and the other purple. It was delightful to see that the class was able to understand when a color was not appropriate and could rapidly find a solution. I would contend that it was a reflection of the nurturing nature of the classroom that they were able to recognize that they could make a better choice and make it without falling into a shame spiral.

Hohn questioned their choice of a long shimmery skirt for Vasilisa and asked them to reconsider who the character is at the beginning of the story and how fancy the satin skirt is. The first graders agreed that the skirt is a princess skirt and that while Vasilisa ends the story as a princess, for the majority of the play she is not a one but is treated like a servant. Therefore, they changed their skirt choice to a red-patched skirt Hohn suggested that had dirt on it, pockets for the doll, and flowers that made Lily happy.

Once Vasilisa was dressed we moved onto Baba Yaga. The first graders dressed her in tattered dark colors that they associated with witches. I would contest that they had learned from their experience with Vasilisa since they chose three complimentary colored articles of clothing. Baba Yaga was dressed in black, purple-grey, and green. Pederson questioned why Baba Yaga's clothes were tattered. The question puzzled the class at first since witches traditionally wear dark tattered clothes. They had analyzed Baba Yaga's behavior, surmised her to be a witch, and therefore instinctively dressed her as a western European witch. When prodded, they speculated that she does not clean her house since she makes Vasilisa do it, therefore, she is dirty or possibly she does not own a washing machine. Jackson suggested that children would tear the clothes when she attempts to eat them.

The first graders had a clear image of what the characters looked like, were able to intellectually analyze them, use descriptive vocabulary, and recognize how colors interact. It was difficult for our young collaborators to articulate the logic behind their choices since the symbols they utilized were self evident to them. When asked why Vasilisa was dressed in red, they did not have an answer. Pederson changed the question to, "What do you think of when you see the color red? What feelings do you have?" These prodding's gave us the answers, "flowers," "mad, your face gets red," "blood,"

“red bricks,” and “because it is pretty”. They had associations with the color red but could not articulate clear reasons for why Vasilisa as a character would wear red beyond that it is pretty and flowers are red. They granted this active color associated with royalty to a strong heroine, but for them it was gut instinct and personal preference. While this portion of the exercise was a challenge for them, they did not shy away from the obstacle but pushed each other and made up background stories for the characters. Costume design was full of rewards for the designers and educators for we walked away with a design to use in the performance and the students showed growth in their artistic creativity and dramaturgy.



Illustration 6: Alulis as Baba Yaga and Hohn as Vasilisa

SESSION FIVE: SCENIC

Pederson and I decided to return to the subject of scenic design and gain further insight into how the first graders imagine the world for our fifth session. (See appendix

Workshop Plan #5 for the lesson plan). As with the costume design section, we began with an analysis, this time of the houses the characters live in. Pederson drew the outline of a house on the board and labeled it 'Vasilisa's House'. She then asked the class, "What actions or events in the story happen in this house?" Pederson wrote their responses inside the house structure. She then asked, "What words would you use to describe this place?" and wrote the students responses outside of the house. We then repeated the same process for the inside of Baba Yaga's house. The first graders described Vasilisa's house as "sad," "furious," "bored," "depressed," "mean," and "unhappy" reflecting their appreciation of the cruelty the Stepmother and Stepsisters show towards Vasilisa. For our young collaborators, Baba Yaga's house was "nervous," "scary," "clean," "deadly," "deathly," "spooky," "creepy," "bloody," "smells good," and "skin-filled." Their words focused on the chores Vasilisa and the doll complete and the fact that Baba Yaga's favorite food is people. After this analysis, we asked the first graders to draw a picture of the inside of one or both of the houses.

For our young collaborators' Vasilisa's house was very much a home, only an unkind home. The majority of the first graders drew the house in the basic house structure that Pederson had drawn on the white-board, which consists of a square with a triangle on top. A number of the first graders divided the square into four quadrants with a staircase and placed the bedroom on top. The repetitive use of this structure makes me wonder whether they are taught to draw a house in this manner and are influenced by dollhouses and this is not necessarily how they see the house or their own knowledge of homes. At seven years old, this is how I drew houses and believed homes should look like, though I grew up in an apartment building and had no personal experience with this sort of house structure. My second initial reaction to the drawings was that a two story structure is difficult, though not impossible, to put on stage. Therefore, I looked for scenic design

inspiration from the ideas that were expressed through discussion with the class, the colors utilized, and what was drawn inside the house. Many of the first graders drew candles, beds for Vasilisa and the doll, and a sofa. The impression, both from their drawings and from the analysis beforehand, was that the house would be an ordinary house with unkind people inhabiting it.



Illustration 7: Stepmother's House by Ivy

Not surprisingly, the majority of our young collaborators chose to draw the interior of Baba Yaga's house. A number of the first graders used the same basic house structure as they did for Vasilisa's house. Seven of the ten drawings that depict Baba Yaga's house had "blood" scribbled in red pencil and markers all over them. Two of the drawings gave her a black cat as a pet. The presence of a black cat is another example of the influence western European ideas of witches had on the class. Though, in some of the Russian stories about Baba Yaga she does keep both a cat and a dog as servants. Three of the drawings depicted a cauldron over open flame. This is reminiscent of common

conceptions of witches, but also refers to the large amount of cooking that takes place in the story. Little Foot called the cauldron a “witch pot,” which I found ingenious and spoke to the essence of the pot and who owns it. It is an interesting display of a seven-year-old’s use of language and the way a child plays with words to make them his own. We brought his language into the rehearsal room and Emmerich incorporated his word into the script. In her pre-performance interview by Pederson, Emmerich explained, “My role is to take everything that the designers and young people are doing and bring it to life” (Emmerich) Therefore she did not confine the first graders influence to the design, but gave their ideas a stronger presence through her narration.

Harlan’s interior of Baba Yaga’s house was very chaotic, though surprisingly had more purple marker scribbles than red ones. His Baba Yaga has remained the robot of his first interpretation. What is particularly striking to me about his drawing is that he has the sun live in the house with her. The knights who bring the different times of day are Baba Yaga’s servants. Therefore, she has power over the sun, and it made sense that the sun is part of her house. This element of her power makes her a rather unique witch or robot depending on your view. Another first grader who had an exceptional interpretation of Baba Yaga is Harlucha. For her, Baba Yaga resembled an octopus with ten legs, which can also be used as hands, had red eyes, and what can only be described as an orange carrot nose. The creature also wore the traditional, black, triangular witch’s hat. What is particularly noteworthy about Harlucha’s drawing is that hanging from the ceiling is a chandelier of bones and organs. In the initial narrative we shared with the children, Baba Yaga used her meals’ bones to construct her fence and therefore it seemed logical to Harlucha that their bones would be used inside as a decorative light source.



Illustration 8: Baba Yaga's House by Harlan and Bone Chandelier by Harlucha

Krauss was able to join us and observe the first grade class for that session. What we walked away with was a clear sense of the emotional atmosphere of those two locations. Vasilisa's house should appear to be a home and yet cold and distant. Baba Yaga's house should resemble a haunted house, spooky and yet clean, since Vasilisa does clean it every day. We then selected elements from the drawings to have in the two locations. Our main ones for Baba Yaga's house were a bone chandelier whose cords were painted red to represent blood and a witch pot. For Vasilisa's house we incorporated a candle, a rug, and a spinning wheel to directly bring the audience into the fairy tale realm.



Illustration 9: Production Photo of Baba Yaga's House by Brianna Bower

SESSION SIX: LIGHTING

Our next and final workshop focused on lighting design. (See appendix Workshop Plan #6 for the lesson plan). The goal of the session was to find out how our young collaborators imagined light and to talk about our perceptions of colors. We began with the question of how light makes us feel. The first graders made faces to express their emotions and then explained how they felt when called upon. We talked about how a rainy day can be sad, but how it can also be comforting. A sunny day can be happy, but for Isabel it also meant summer and tornadoes. We then moved onto color and they instinctively associated emotions with colors. In theatre, we use light and color to express the emotional atmosphere of the scene as well as the place and time of day. And so this activity allowed the first graders to begin to consciously associate light and color with emotion in addition to time of day.

Lighting is an ethereal and intangible element and so I wanted to conduct an activity that allowed our young collaborators to experience and play with light as a step beyond our emotional analysis. Pederson and I split the class into two groups. Each sat at a table with a handful of multicolored M&Ms and a Stage Ape LED Par lighting instrument next to it. Pederson led one group of first graders and I led the other. I turned the LED light to blue, held it above the M&Ms, and asked the first graders to separate the colors into piles. The blue light altered the colors of the M&Ms so that they were harder to distinguish. The group worked together to make different piles of colors and was successful in their endeavor. I continued the activity with red, violet, green, and finally white light. Pederson's group organized the reds and oranges together while my group, mainly Isabel and Laia, were successfully able to distinguish the colors. Our young collaborators were excited to play with an actual theatrical lighting instrument and were able to observe first-hand how colored light can affect our perception of objects they shine on.

After our exploration of the manipulation of color with actual theatrical instruments, we turned to their favorite activity, drawing. This time I gave the first graders brown toned butcher paper and pastels so that it would be easier for them to draw light. The prompt I gave them was to draw a picture of their favorite place in the story, and to pay attention to the light and time of day of those locations. The drawings we received from this lesson were particularly inspiring. I would argue that it was a combination of the preparatory activity and the special drawing materials provided that caused our young collaborators to give special attention and care to these drawings.

As expected, the majority of the first graders chose to draw Baba Yaga's house. They understood that it's a very different light in her house and that it does not have to be night. An easy indicator is the sun for day, which the first graders all put in the corner,

and the left corner at that, except for Harlan. Three of the first graders drew the night sky as pure black. In one particular picture it appears that no light could penetrate the darkness. Harlucha indicated the night sky by drawing a moon and around it a series of yellow dots for stars. Her black is solely found in the smoke that emits from the chimney as dinner is cooked.



Illustration 10: Baba Yaga's House by Harlucha and Ivy

Our young collaborators had different opinions on whether there should be stars at night or not. Harlucha chose to put stars outside of Baba Yaga's house because stars signify night. Ruby decided that her forest was too dark and dense for stars since the forest is scary and the doll had to guide Vasilisa through it. Stars, by contrast, are considered peaceful, beautiful, and can guide one home; therefore they did not have the correct emotional appeal for her vision. She also mixed black and blue for the night in her

forest since there are many different colors present in the sky and light. While the drawings evoked the time of day, they were all emotionally driven.



Illustration 11: Forest at Night by Ruby

The comprehension that light contains a multitude of colors was evident in their drawings of the Red Knight by Isabel, Twohey, and Laila. The sun in these three pictures is a mixture of yellow and orange and has a single beam projecting out of it. The Red Knight rears up to greet the sun. These three drawings confirm the important role the knights play in bringing the times of day to the world.



Illustration 12: The Red Knight by Isabel

The importance of the knights and the visual transformation of night to day and vice versa are found in Smithson and Harlan's pictures. Harlan drew the Red Knight riding through the forest bringing the blue sky with him and chasing away the black night. Smithson drew an abstract sunrise. He has blues, reds, greens, oranges, violets, and yellows in organic shapes on his paper to show the multitude of colors one sees in the sky as the sun rises. His drawing and imagination calls for a magnificent sunrise as the story is performed.

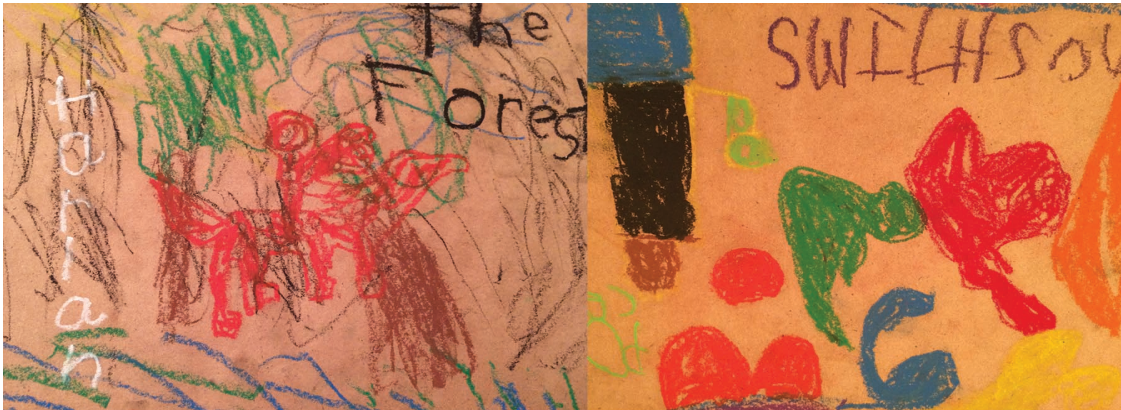


Illustration 13: Red Knight by Harlan and Sunrise by Smithson

My favorite drawing came from Lily who drew Vasilisa outside of her pink house with the sun shining in the background. She then added little bulbs of different colors hanging down from the ceiling. Pederson pointed to the colored bulbs and asked what they were. Lily replied, "They're the lights in the play."

The drawing exercise made it clear that the children understood the emotional implications of the light and how it changed the atmosphere of the location. Their drawings expressed the importance of different times of day and that the light must perceptually change on stage to make the role of the knights clear. The forest and Baba Yaga's house must be ominous even during the daytime while the widow's house and

palace were places of celebration. I was heartened by their comprehension and would have liked to take their designs further.



Illustration 14: Vasilisa outside the Stepmother's House by Lily

The Production & Collaboration

TRANSLATION OF IDEAS INTO REALITY

Pederson and I then left our young collaborators and shared all we had learned with our adult theatre artists. We brought them pictures, recordings, drawings, and descriptions of what had occurred in the classroom. Together we discussed what was important to the children, what they agreed upon, and how we would utilize and translate their ideas into a three dimensional theatrical design. It was important for me to incorporate as much as possible the ideas and the visual and auditory images that our young collaborators had developed about the story and characters of Baba Yaga and Vasilisa. I wanted to create a professional production that was informed by the child's imagination and so the ideas our young collaborators put forth were valuable research data for the professional designers.

There are a few challenges to the direct incorporation of our young collaborators' ideas. The first is the reality of small-scale theatre productions. We lacked a large budget and labor to help build and create an elaborate set. Therefore, we had to make clear, economical choices that represented the first graders ideas and vision of the story. The second qualifier is the idea about how much to directly reproduce a person's drawing in the final production. As an adult, I am unable to draw everything exactly as I see and imagine it. Therefore, as a designer I use outside research and illustrative language to describe my vision to my collaborators. As I do not expect my drawings to be a perfect representation of my imagination, I do not expect the first graders' drawings to be exactly what they envision either. For this reason, Pederson and I made a point to talk to them about their drawings, which gave them the opportunity to explain their ideas more fully. Therefore, their descriptive words were as important, if not more so, than the drawings in the incorporation of our young collaborators' ideas into three-dimensional designs.

Lastly, it was important to me that the production be done with high professional standards and thus be an exciting introduction to the beauty of professional theatre for these first graders.

Honoring the first graders' ideas and translating their visions into a three dimensional design did not mean doing everything exactly as they said or represented it in their drawings. Our team of adult collaborators have years of experience as professional theatre artists and so have a lot to contribute to the production. What our young collaborators provided was a wealth of ideas and interpretations to inform our final production.

SOUND

Each design area had different strengths and various needs from our young collaborators and professional artists. Pederson and I began our residency with sound as we wanted to first establish the environment and making sounds was easy for the children to understand and participate in. Mimicking sounds is something that they have been doing all their lives and we provided an opportunity for them to identify sounds associated with the story. I took the actual soundscape created by the first graders in the classroom and inserted it into the performance. Our young collaborators did not create all of the sounds needed for the performance. In the workshop, they only created the forest sounds and as they did this as a group I did not have individual recordings of specific sounds they made, such as the owls and wind. If I were to do this project again, I am interested in the class being responsible for the creation of all the sounds in the story. Their voices therefore would be the only recorded sounds present in the production. As it

was, I found recordings of sounds that the first graders did not make, for instance, the stepmother's creaking chair and the rustle of the leaves as Baba Yaga arrives home.

Pederson and I found that it was difficult for our young collaborators to recognize their own voices in the production. I believe this was for two reasons. First of all, it is harder for them to recognize sounds since they are at a visual age. Secondly, they had created a soundscape of layered sounds and so were unable to identify individual voices. If we had individual recordings of a sound, then I would expect the first graders to have an easier time in identifying their voice, and yet it may not have the full strength of the layered forest sounds to create an ominous atmosphere.

In the rehearsal room Pederson, Emmerich, Solorio, and I consciously looked for places where our young audience would be able to participate in order to keep them engaged. A number of the places we discovered for audience participation had to do with the creation of sounds. The first place was when Vasilisa and the doll do the chores at the Stepmother's house. Emmerich asked the audience to help first with the washing of dishes, in which they would rub their hands together to make a swishing sound. Then with the sweeping of the floor, in which one hand would lightly sweep over the other making a soft clap. And lastly with the chopping of wood in which the audience was encouraged to clap with their hands stretched straight out in front of them. The concept of our audience and our young collaborators making the sounds of the production carried into the forest. We introduced the individual sounds of the woods by listening to a recording of an owl; Emmerich then asked, "What sound is that?" and gave the audience an opportunity to answer and make the sound before continuing with the story. We did this for wolves, then wind, and finally layered on the first graders' soundscape. Though we were unable to incorporate the first graders' individual voices into all aspects of the

production, we were able use our young audiences' voices and honor the way layered way we created the forest soundscape in the classroom.

COSTUMES



Illustration 15: Production Photo of Baba Yaga's Feet by Brianna Bower

The costume workshop was our most successful session on design in that we walked out of the classroom with two full costumes. This was possible since Hohn brought costume pieces in the color palette chosen by our young collaborators to the classroom. Neither Hohn nor I would have chosen the combination of a pink blouse and a red skirt, but as our young collaborators had selected this pairing, we decided to honor their design and not to alter it. Hohn described her role as a polisher or tailor. She did not make the choices, the first graders did that as the designers, but she curated the raw material for them and then knit their choices together into a cohesive final product.

Pederson interviewed Hohn before the performance and after the workshop in order to gain a costume designer's perspective about our process. Hohn claimed that her design process for a TYA show does not diverge greatly from her design process for an adult production. The main difference she found was in what she pulled. If this had been

a piece for adults, the costumes would have been darker and grittier. As it was for first graders, she chose brighter colors and dynamic reds that our young collaborators had used in their drawings of Vasilisa. In the interview, Pederson asserted, “It’s not that we’re not bringing anything to the table. We’re professional theatre artists, this is what we do; we have lots to bring to the table. And they do too” (Hohn). The question is how to bring enough that is helpful and have something to work with; how to give them enough information to be successful. Hohn did a good job of this for she carefully chose objects to bring to the classroom that spoke to their interpretation of the characters based on the drawings they had already produced and discussions with us about what we had learned from the children. The items she pulled allowed the class to have a debate on what the characters looked like and inspired them to make interesting choices. In the postmortem discussion among the adult artistic team, Hohn asserted:

I would say that they have a really great costume design eye, directly from my experience in the classroom. I wouldn’t have picked all red, but it looked amazing. Those are all things that I pulled, but it was a surprise how little I had to guide them. That was kind of a lesson. It was all around refreshing. I feel like I learned a lot, and I found it a really moving process. (Hohn)

She was able to give them enough information through the articles of clothing selected and the earlier character analysis for them to make good design decisions without forcing them in one direction or the other. In the process, she was able to strike a delicate balance that honored our young collaborators’ ideas and at the same time allowed her to grow as an artist and instructor. The costume workshop was a very tangible and visual day, consistent with their developmental strengths. Mr. Wright told Pederson and I in our post performance conversation that our young collaborators were delighted to be able to recognize their costume design at the production.

The adult process that the children were not a part of was the combination of their costume choices. In rehearsal, Emmerich experimented with how to transform herself from the Vasilisa/Story-Teller character into the creature Baba Yaga. The fastest and most effective choice was hiking up her red skirt and hunching over so that her body language was utterly different. Hohn then suggested that we put the tattered Baba Yaga skirt our young collaborators had chosen underneath the red Vasilisa skirt. In this way we combined the clothing elements our young collaborators had chosen into a cohesive design.



Illustration 16: Production Photos of Baba Yaga and Vasilisa by Briana Bower

SCENIC

Scenic design was one of the hardest forms of design to bring into the classroom. It was successful in the sense that the first graders liked how the different locations of the story were represented, agreed that we had incorporated their descriptive language, and had established the distinct atmosphere of each local. However, it was hard, if not impossible, for them to pinpoint an object and say that was their design. We had trees, a witch pot, a bone fence, and bone chandelier, but with the exception of the chandelier, the objects were universal elements found in the descriptive narrative of the story and not original ideas from individual members of the class. The one scenic element that was missing for our young collaborators, Mr. Wright, and myself were the chicken legs. The lack of chicken legs was an unfortunate and frustrating consequence of little time and small budget.

If I were to do this project again I would spend many more classroom sessions on scenic design and work with the class to develop a full set design instead of only the beginning elements and analysis. I would keep our first scenic day almost the same, with the exception that I would analyze all of the different story locations and their importance. I would also allow the children to draw the outside or inside of the houses therefore giving them more choices. The second session would be about theatre space. We would discuss promenade theatre where the audience moves to follow the action versus traditional theatre in which the audience sits in one place and watches. We would talk about how scene changes and different locations function in each setup. As I am partial to promenade theatre for this type of theatrical experience, I would ask them to focus on promenade, which is also easier to consider with multiple locations.

The focus of the third session would be designing a set. We would have a quick review of what we discussed in the previous workshop and then I would divide the class into four groups and ask each group to build a single model of the set. As the young collaborators in the group may have different ideas, I would serve as a guide to help them discuss their visions and reach a unified decision. I would provide them with Legos, paper, scissor, and tape to use to put the model together. Included would also be a small printed out ground plan of the theatre space. When they finished, each group would show their model to the class and we would talk about them. I would like to end the session by choosing a model or a combination of models that would then become our set. This is where it is still important to have a professional scenic designer who is able to lend his expertise to the process.

It can be argued that we did a disservice to our young collaborators since we were unable to offer extended sessions on scenic design. It is difficult for me to say that they designed the set. But they certainly inspired elements of it. They provided raw research data on what portions of the story were intriguing to children and the atmosphere of each location. Importantly, they confirmed my initial idea that it should be a haunted house and other primary objects like the trees and bones. Yet they did not have the opportunity to put the elements together in space, which is a key component of scenic design.

Krauss, though, had a different interpretation of the information we gleaned from our session on scenic design. In his process interview with Pederson, Krauss stated,

I would not call myself a scenic designer on this show I would probably call myself, title my role, more as a scenic facilitator. I look at the ideas that these students come up with and what they envision this world to be and interpret them in ways that are theatrically possible but holding the integrity of their ideas.
(Krauss)

The use of our young collaborators ideas in place of his own caused Krauss to give up a large portion of the scenic designer's responsibility and so he can say of the first graders, "Oh, they're absolutely integral. As children we are blessed with this innate ability to create in our heads" (Krauss). He embraced the fact that our young collaborators were able to visualize without being hindered by the knowledge of what is possible in theatre. They drew chicken legs for Baba Yaga's house as the story instructed without considering whether the house would stand on flimsy legs. They drew two story houses that are difficult to put on stage and make functional. In the child's imagination, anything is possible. We embraced this idea and asked them only to provide ideas that conformed to the story and not explain the realities of theatre. Krauss ended his interview saying, "Being able to see their vastly different ideas on how they interpret the same information inspires me" (Krauss). He walked away from the session with ideas and inspiration from an important group of designers. Even though they did not provide him with a ground plan, they had told him what elements he needed to include in his ground plan and in his design.



Illustration 18: Production Photo of the Set from above by Rachel Alulis

LIGHTING

The lighting was another section that was difficult to bring into the classroom. Overall, I would argue that this session was successful since the class gained an understanding of color, the way in which light affects our emotions, the atmosphere of the room, and how objects look under different lighting. They produced interesting drawings that spoke to the emotional atmosphere of the different scenes. As the designer who translated their ideas, I felt as though their drawings told me what was important to them. For instance, the sunset and sunrises, as well as the different colors present in sunlight were found in a number of drawings. I knew that that the forest would be dark, even during the day, and that some of the first graders saw stars while others disagreed. And yet, because we'd had such a short time on a difficult subject, I felt that I had a lot of liberty to put my own thoughts and ideas into the design. They provided me with data on what was interesting to a first grader and the liberty to integrate their ideas into my design.

I would have like to have taken this subject further by creating a cue sheet with the class. In order to accomplish this, we would talk through each scene in the story and ask them to describe the lighting: Is it night or day? Is it a happy place or a scary one or a sad one? Are the people who live here rich or poor, are they good or bad? Are we inside or outside? Are we in a forest? Do they have electricity or do you think they use candles? And so on. A complimentary activity to this discussion would be drawings so that each cue had its own set of drawings. The combination of the drawings and the verbal descriptions would have told me what the cues in the show should have been. This activity would have provided further research for my design and given our young collaborators a stronger design voice in lighting.

Overall our young collaborators enjoyed the lighting in the performance and were especially thrilled with the fog rising out of the Stepmother's cottage and how it changed color as the lights changed color. They were intrigued and surprised by how the knights were represented by light. This led to a discussion on what templates are and the different tricks you can do as a lighting designer. I do not think that the representation of the knights through light was the wrong decision, but it would have been beneficial to have discussed this in class. We should have brought up all the difficult moments to stage, such as the knights, the chicken legs, and the bone fence, and learned how our young collaborators thought they should be done. They are not professional theatre artists and so their ideas may not be feasible, but this does not mean that they should be left out of the conversation.

PERFORMANCE

The focus of the residency was to create a theatrical design of *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa* with the first grade classroom and so we did not concentrate on the performance of the various characters in the story. While performance was not our emphasis in the classroom, it was highly important to the production and so Emmerich served as an essential collaborator in our artistic team. Pederson and I shared with her the recordings of the classroom, in which the young people were very vocal about their ideas and their drawings. They clearly communicated their thoughts so that Emmerich felt as though she knew them without ever being able to meet them. She took the ideas our young collaborators brought to the table and infused them into her performance.

In her interview with Pederson she stated, "My role is to take everything that the designers and the young people are doing and bring it to life. And to make people laugh

in rehearsal” (Emmerich). She is a generous performer for she did not make the product about herself but took into account and was strongly influenced by the adult theatre artists and the first graders’ voices. As the lighting designer, writer, and generative artist, it is a great gift for the performer to say that she will bring the story in all of its elements to life. She is the one who stands on stage and breathes life into the words and confirms the meaning behind the design choices.

The class had a major influence on how Emmerich portrayed Baba Yaga. She heard the way they thought that Baba Yaga laughed via the classroom recordings, she listened to their interpretations of her as part monster, part witch, part woman and all of this effected how she changed her voice, her body language and played the Baba Yaga scenes. Without being asked to, she brought their ideas into her acting since they are important collaborators in this process (Emmerich). The kids are “the most important people in this process, they are the idea generators. When we don’t know what to do with something we ask what did the kids do, what did the kids say? I think of them as the experts in this process and we are the translators and interpreters of their vision” (Emmerich). Emmerich welcomed the kids’ ideas into her acting. The voice she did for Baba Yaga was influenced by the kids but also had an element that reminded me of Jim Henson’s Muppets. The voice originated from a classroom recording, but Emmerich embraced it and made it her own since it enabled her to be a little frightening without going so far as to scare our young audience and bring humor into the piece. Even though she had never met them, and possibly because of that, it was very important to her to honor their concepts. Her goal was to tell the story as they imagined it as children, to bring their vision of the story life as a performer, and to infuse their ideas with her art as an experienced performer.

In her interview, Emmerich mused, “I wonder if we are honoring their ideas more because we are educators and they are young people, than we would adults. I feel like sometimes there’s some pushback with designers, with that’s not feasible or not comfortable in my body while if the kids asked me to, I’d do it” (Emmerich). At the beginning of this new process of creating theatre for and by young audiences, the artistic team decided that the production was as much about the process and education as it was about the design and performance. The goal was to educate children about theatrical design and then invite them to see their designs professionally realized. In order to successfully do this, we incorporated as many of their ideas as possible and allowed their imaginations to be a core part of our research and the resultant design. It was important that the performer participate in this and so the fact that Emmerich was also a generous educator was ideal since it was part of her practice to place the child’s need before her own. She was also able to do this as she found multiple opportunities to facilitate during her performance as the storyteller. As the storyteller she was a flexible performer and facilitator who catered to the needs of her audience as well as the desires expressed by our young collaborators.

Pederson reacted to the notion that we treat young people and adults differently and therefore create different theatre in TYA. She brought up the continual debate, “When do we treat it (the performance) the same as adult theatre and when do we need to differentiate because they are younger people and because it is different? They are physically shorter, they can’t see over that set piece. They just have different interests” (Pederson). This debate is complimented by the questions, are we overcompensating because generally young people aren’t listened to? Would we be listening to our collaborators so generously if it were a community engagement piece with adults? I would hope that we would listen as sincerely if we worked with adults outside the theatre

community in the creation of this piece. It was important to me as an educator to listen deeply to our young collaborators and to honor their vision because my wish was to create a production that accessed the imagination of children rather than ways in which adults visualize the world. Honoring their vision was to bring their imaginations and ideas to life. I was interested in their drawings but more so their descriptive language and the atmospheres that it evoked. As they are not experienced designers, it was important to have professional artists who could hear the ideas our young collaborators expressed and weave them together into a cohesive theatrical design. I am not interested in TYA that does not honor children's' ideas or does not have a high design aesthetic. I would argue that it is important to introduce young people to theatre with high-level design, acting, and writing elements. TYA should not be simplified. It should differentiate from adult theatre in the incorporation of children's ideas and interests. The stories should speak to children and adults. There are plenty of age-old tales that have a universal meaning and therefore the performance that is aimed at children can be appreciated and enjoyed by all age groups. While I chose *Vasilisa the Beautiful* since it is appropriate for a first grade audience, it also has a roughness and a mystery within it that appeals to me as an adult.

ADULT COLLABORATION PROCESS

The adult artists came together as a cohesive team appreciating the ideas generated by our young collaborators and by one another. The process of creating this work of theatre became less about our own design contributions, personal aesthetics, and egos, and more about honoring the vision put forth by our young collaborators. We wanted to create a design that embodied their ideas and vision of the story. The lack of ego combined with a serene leadership created a supportive environment, which our stage

manager, Solorio, commented on, “Something that really sticks out to me is that everybody had a positive attitude towards creating this together with everyone’s opinions in mind. There were no conversations that didn’t turn out to be productive” (Solorio). The positive attitude is one that a number of productions lack with artists who bring their egos and personal aspirations into the piece as opposed to the greater whole. As a result, we were able to move forward at a steady pace.

The importance of collaboration was also present in how each discipline informed the other. In her interview with Pederson, Emmerich harkened back to our first rehearsal where she told the story and started walking around the courtyard on instinct,

A lot came out of that day we told the story outside and I just moved. Maybe we were already thinking of moving the forest but I feel a lot of ownership over that idea and where the forest is. I feel like it was all of us working together and listening to each other. I feel like there’s a lot of listening in this process.
(Emmerich)

As a team, in our first rehearsal, we put the story on its feet and explored how it made Emmerich move and what the language itself told her to do. The rehearsals therefore informed the ground plan. Krauss was not expected to develop a ground plan for the set in isolation but rather to listen to our young collaborators and the performance needs that came from the rehearsal room.

All disciplines, our young collaborators, designers, performer, and dramaturge brought their unique perspective into the room and all perspectives and needs were valued. Pederson built on this notion in our postmortem discussion, “I saw everybody valuing what everyone was bringing to it, and I think that extended to the young people too. I think they felt really seen and heard when we were in their classroom. And they were really engaged through everything and super excited to see the show” (Pederson). A good collaborative environment is one where the artists can speak and are shown respect

even if their ideas are not ultimately used in the production. The kindness of this particular collaboration was exceptionally present, possibly because children were an integral part of this process and so the majority of the ideas were not our own. “They were ideas coming from first graders. So the respect for their ideas was huge and it carried over into all of us respecting each other’s ideas because we were representing this class that some of us didn’t even get to meet” (Emmerich). As with Emmerich, it was important to me that the first graders’ ideas were treated with respect, even if they ultimately were not employed in the production. My goal was for this to extend to the entire collaboration team. And so I was encouraged when Solorio commented on her happy surprise that everyone, even the stage manager, was encouraged to give input into the process. We have a class of seventeen six to seven-year-olds as our designers, which is an exciting challenge, and so it was important to have six adults to help process their ideas and figure out how to make them a reality on the stage. The importance of respect for all people involved enabled us to be able to create a new piece of theatre.

MR. WRIGHT’S RESPONSE

After the performance, Pederson and I sat down with Mr. Wright to gather his response to our project, what he thought of how we translated the class’ ideas, and what we had brought to his students. His first comment was that the children’s strengths were amplified in the project and we brought out strengths that neither he nor they knew existed. For instance, Jackson is a precocious and articulate student but not artistically creative. He is more comfortable in logic and math and less likely to write or spend a lot of time on his drawings. And yet, *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa* brought out his creative side. The drawings he produced for the story were detailed while he normally draws stick

figures. Sravya is introverted and smart, but in class with Pederson and me, the student was comfortable enough to speak up and share her thoughts. She also brought Mr. Wright a poem she'd written and claimed to be a playwright. Through this residency experience she was able to understand the components of theatre and identify as a playwright in this process. Ivy and several other students were also prone to ask questions and dig deeper into the story. Even at seven-years-old these children were able to analyze the story and question the nature of the characters and plot line choices. Sravya asked Pederson how the Stepmother doesn't know about the doll because she's a witch and witches know things. She didn't just accept the fairy tale logic but questioned how this was possible and therefore began further dramatic analysis. Pederson and I were able to share with them a part of the arts that they are not always exposed to. Children enjoy play-acting and have vivid imaginations. This experience allowed them to see how their interpretation of a story and characters can be brought to life in theatre. We did not set ourselves apart as the instructors and students, but rather embraced them as fellow artists and therefore brought out their innate creativity and strengths.

Mr. Wright's favorite part of the performance was the walk through the forest as this was a moment when the audience was fully immersed in the story and the set. He also enjoyed Baba Yaga's house with its simple employment of the class' ideas. He missed the chicken legs and wanted more, wanted everything to be bigger. While he wanted more details, he understood and explained to his class, the importance of minimalism in theatre and that a theatrical performance could not bring all of the details of reality, or the cinema, on stage. Sravya commented that it's supposed to be in your imagination as the picture in your head is so much better than reality. Mr. Wright and the class saw connections and reasons behind all of the scenic choices, whether intentional or not. Harlucha and Lily argued that the widow's house had a wooden floor for dancing.

This makes sense at it is the happy part of the story in which Vasilisa has found a home, family, and is married and one can believe that she would dance at her wedding. Our young collaborators brought up the fact that the black knight was actually created with purple light. Connor and Harlan argued in favor of this decision since they remembered from our session on lighting and the M&M activity that there is no such thing as black light. This defense of my decision was heartening as it showed that the class had learned from the session I taught on lighting and that they were able to logically work through the different design choices.



Illustration 20: Production Photo of The Black Knight by Rachel Alulis

The piece for Mr. Wright was clearly interactive and influenced by his class. The soundscape resonated with the class after the performance, though it was difficult for them to appreciate it during the play. It was easier for them to recognize their work in the

tangible and visual elements of set and costumes. He agreed that the residency should have been longer as that would have allowed us to make models and delve deeper into design elements, particularly scenic. The fact that Pederson and I were able to bring visual and hands on activities that allowed the children to participate in the creative process and treated the kids as intelligent and valued collaborators resonated with Mr. Wright as the way early childhood education should be taught and why our sessions were so successful with the class. We had engaged them, not lectured at them; we had respected them and encouraged their questions and articulation of their ideas, not talked down to them. The residency had given his students an experience of the creation of theatre that most elementary students are unaware of and had helped foster their creativity and strengths no had seen previously activated.

CONCLUSION

The project provided a growth opportunity for both the first graders and the adult artists. The first graders learned about the use of theatrical design for storytelling and their individual creative strengths. The adult artists were able to participate in a full collaboration with children in which all ideas are honored. The children went deeper than their initial impressions of the story. They presented the adult artists with design ideas and literary analysis. Their ideas provided an important research component for the adult artists and all were discussed even if they were ultimately not implemented in the final design. The collaboration treated the first graders as experts of what it is to be a child and respected their input. The adult artists were able to learn about a different creation method for a theatre piece, which they could then take away to their respective areas and design processes. As a theatre artist it opened me up to a new area of research and an

important collaborative voice. This process of creating a new TYA piece brings the kids into the art as well as the art to the kids. It treats the young people with respect and pushes to try a new idea and form of expression. I want to bring young people into the creation of theatre and to bring the professional theatre to them. The process here of arts education is just as important as the product, a professionally produced TYA play.

The procedure Pederson and I established combined the ideas put forth by the Trusty Sidekicks Theatre Company, Punchdrunk Theatre Company, and Chiara Guidi. The Trusty Sidekicks provided us the model for going into the classroom and asking questions that sparked the child's interest. We followed their structure of generating ideas in the classroom and then taking the ideas to the adult artists who implemented them into a theatrical design. From Punchdrunk Theatre Company, we took inspiration to create a promenade style piece that immersed our audience in the story and incorporated the atmospheric details described by our young collaborators. Their structure for *The House Where Winter Lives* encouraged us to explore immersive inclusion so that the young audience helped to create the atmosphere and participate in the story through the chores, creation of sounds, and questions for Baba Yaga. Chiara Guidi brought us the theory of inverted pedagogy and the proposal that children have a lot to teach adult artists and that adult artists should be open to and listen to the younger imaginations of children in order to deepen their comprehension of the fairy tale world. Pederson summarized the way we viewed the process in our adult artist post mortem, "I think it's less about being exact and more about the inspiration and surprise and making us think of things that we weren't thinking about" (Pederson). Our process was one of inspiration and integration of ideas. Our young collaborators thought of details and questioned parts of the story that inspired the design and helped bring the story to life. Their questions, analysis, and ideas were integrated into the final production composed by the adult artists. Pederson and I wanted

to know how the children visualized and analyzed the story in order to put their ideas on stage. We wanted to be surprised; we wanted to be inspired; we wanted them to make us think. If for no other reason, this project was a success in that all of these challenges were met.

One major difference from the residency and production Pederson and I created and those led by the Trusty Sidekicks is that we had a script, or at least a story, and so were less interested in the exploration of story-telling ideas produced by the children. Instead we used their ideas as explanation for design choices. We could not exactly replicate all their artistic desires. However, everything they said was still of value, as it was used to inspire our final design.

Our young collaborators filled the role of designers rather than of writers. In that way my method was closer to that of Punchdrunk and Chiara Guidi for I was interested in the incorporation of children's imagination and how they visualize the world into theatre design. I wanted them to conquer the challenges, defeat the villain, and show the adults how this is done. I am fascinated with Guidi's inverse pedagogy and am interested in how to fully employ this theory in TYA. For this performance, I took inspiration from her production of *Buchettino* and the importance she places on the imagination of children and the design elements of light and sound. New sounds and shifts in the lighting complimented the story that was told by a narrator, in Guidi's production. The sounds trigger the audiences' imagination and make the story come to life. Like Guidi and her Children's Theatre Experimental School, Pederson and I gave our class certain objects to explore and use to help create the piece of theatre with. The imagination that the children brought into the classroom was the important element that inspired the adult theatre artists and the creation of the production.

The methods Pederson and I used were inspired by elements of these three theatre companies, but were tailored to suite our production and our first grade class. We were able to honor the first graders ideas through discussion and incorporation into the final production and were inspired by their thoughts and analysis of the story. Our young collaborators were the seed from which the production sprouted. They gave voice to the design and they were our target audience. I believe that is it important for artists in TYA to ask what their target audience imagines and to bring that story to life. I have confidence that both parties benefited from the experience and that the combination of design and dramaturgy (design contains an awful lot of dramaturgy naturally) can strengthen the first grade classroom since it provides an outlet of creativity and writing that the class will be passionate about. In his enthusiasm, Mr. Wright integrated the story and analysis Pederson and I brought to the class into their other lessons. He had our young collaborators write dramaturgical notes about *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa* for our program as part of their writing section. His lesson plans showed how the story could be applied to the other subjects taught in the first grade. Theatre is a combination of creative disciplines that enables one to grow as a person and challenges you to think no matter how old you are. Pederson and I were lucky enough to bring this process to a first grade classroom who we could inspire and who certainly inspired us.

Appendices

BABA YAGA AND VASILISA SCRIPT

retold by: Rachel Alulis

The story is designed as a promenade piece where the audience follows the storyteller as she moves through the different physical locations. There is the Stepmother's Cottage, the Forest, Baba Yaga's House, and the Widow's House.

The house opens to the storyteller sitting on the rug in the Stepmother's house. She invites the audience to come and sit close to her on the steps, the rug, or the chairs. There are pillows for them to sit on so they will be more comfortable. She then engages the audience, mainly the children, in conversation—"Do you have a favorite story?" When the house doors close and the audience is settled, the storyteller asks if they have ever been given a gift by someone who loved them. She will listen and talk about their answers and use this as a transition into the story about a girl whose mother gave her a gift because she loved her very much.

"My story is about a merchant who lived with his wife and daughter..."

Once upon a time, many years ago, there was a merchant who lived with his wife and their young daughter, Vasilisa. The little girl was brave and kind to everyone she met. When she was only eight years old her mother became very ill. One night she gave Vasilisa a little rag doll she had made herself. The doll was colorful and soft and fit inside the girl's apron pocket. *(Storyteller pulls the doll out of her pocket)* Her mother told her, "When ever you need anything or are in trouble, just ask the doll. And she will help you. But first you must feed her."

The mother soon passed away and the merchant grieved for a time. But he believed that a child should have a mother's love. With this in mind, he looked around the town and surrounding villages, until he found a widow with two daughters of her own. Her girls were hardly any older than Vasilisa. And so the merchant married her, thinking to give his daughter a mother and friends all at once. In front of the merchant the stepmother was all nurturing kindness. But as soon as the merchant was off to work, she bossed Vasilisa around and allowed her girls to tease and bully her. In fact she encouraged it. The stepmother gave poor Vasilisa all the household chores. Vasilisa did not despair for she had the doll to help her. Every night she would save a portion of her supper and give it to the doll. Miraculously, the doll ate up the food. Then, Vasilisa would confide all of her worries and the numerous tasks her stepmother had set for her. The doll would whisper, "The day is wiser than the night. So get some sleep and do not bother your head with all those troubles." And every morning, the doll would help Vasilisa with her chores. She helped her sweep the floor (*hands swipe together to make the sound of sweeping. With each action the storyteller invites the audience to join her*) and scrub the dishes (*hands rub together to make the sound of scrubbing*) and chop the wood (*hands clap on leg to make sound of chopping wood*). Until all the chores were done. (*Storyteller motions for the audience to stop helping with the chores.*) Meanwhile, the stepmother and her daughters sat in the house like fine ladies and didn't lift a finger.

One day, the merchant packed his bags and went off on a long journey to sell his goods in another country. The stepmother seized the opportunity and moved the girls to a small cottage near the woods. In these very woods the dreaded Baba Yaga has lived for centuries. Her favorite food is humans. She would eat people for every meal if she could, but first she needs to catch them—and so rarely gets to enjoy this delicacy.

The stepmother constantly found excuses to send poor Vasilisa into the woods hoping Baba Yaga would catch and eat her up. But the doll guided Vasilisa and kept her away from the dreaded Baba Yaga. The frustrated stepmother therefore devised another plan to rid herself of Vasilisa.

One evening she gave each of the girls a task; the eldest was to sew lace, the middle to knit stockings, and the youngest to spin yarn. She snuffed out all of the candles except for one; which she left for the girls to see by. (*Storyteller holds a single lit candle.*) She then sat down in her rocking chair and watched the girls work. No one could see her evil grin in the dark, but all could hear the creaking (*creaking rocking chair sound*) of her chair as it rocked back and forth. The night wore on. The candle sputtered and flickered. The eldest went to tend the flame, but instead snuffed the candle out! (*Storyteller snuffs the candle out.*) As she had been instructed to do by her mother. Try as they might, the girls could not strike a match; for the stepmother was a witch who had cast a spell upon the house.

“One of us will have to go and borrow a light from our neighbor, Baba Yaga.” The eldest declared, “I will not go! I can see by the light of my pins.”

“I will not go! I can see by the light of my needles,” protested the middle stepsister.

“Vasilisa, you must go! You cannot spin yarn in the dark.” The stepmother declared. And they pushed Vasilisa out of the house.

(The storyteller invites the audience to follow her and walks out of the house into the forest.)

Vasilisa walked all night into the strange and dark woods. The owls hooted. What sound does an owl make? *(The storyteller leaves space for the audience to respond before calling,)* Whoo! Whoo! *(Play recorded sound of owls)* the wolves howled. What sound does a wolf make? *(The storyteller leaves space for the audience to respond before calling,)* Arroo! Arroo! *(Add recorded sound of wolves)* and the wind whistled through the trees. What sound does the wind make? *(The storyteller leaves space for the audience to respond before calling,)* Shhhhhh! Shhhhh! *(Add recorded sound of wind. After three beats, add in the soundscape created by the first graders).* She took comfort in the little doll's reassuring voice and her warm presence. *(Sound of horse galloping. The soundscape, wolves, and owls fade out. The howling wind decreases in intensity.)* After walking for many hours, she was amazed to see a white horse with a knight in shining white armor riding across the path! Dawn had broken. *(Sound of horse galloping and add sound of birds chirping)* She walked on for a little bit. And across her path rode a red horse with a knight in gleaming red armor. The sun had fully risen.

Vasilisa walked *(fade out the birds and howling wind, add in the owls, wolves, and a creaky wind)* all day deeper and deeper into the woods—until she came to the clearing where she stopped dead in fear. She had reached her destination. At first glance it looked like a traditional Russian wooden cottage. Yet, it stood upon two chicken legs that looked as though they could run very fast. The fence surrounding it was made of human bones. And skulls with empty eyeholes looked down from stakes. The gate was

made of bones from people's legs. Thumbs and fingers served as bolts and the lock was a mouth with sharp teeth. (*Sound of horse galloping*) Just then, another horse and rider galloped across her path. This one was charcoal black and sparkled in the night. He rode through the fence and appeared to be swallowed up by the earth. (*Baba Yaga creaking, leaves crunch, and rustle sounds. The sounds begin at a low volume and are raised during this sequence*) Night had fallen. No sooner had she realized this, than the forest around her began to crackle and crunch. Baba Yaga had returned home. The creature was riding her traditional device. She stood in her mortar spurring it on with her pestle and sweeping away her tracks with a broom. (*Baba Yaga sounds fade out*)

“Fie, Fie! I smell Russian blood! Come out, come out where ever you are. There is no use in hiding.” Baba Yaga called out as she disembarked.

The girl took a deep breath and stepped forward, “Grandmother, it's me, Vasilisa. My stepsisters sent me to fetch a light.”

“Yes, yes, I know of your stepfamily. But first you must stay and work for me. If you do as I say, then I'll give you a light. But if you don't; Ill eat you up.”

She then turned to the gate and commanded, “Slide back, my strong bolts! Open up, my wide gate!” She drove in whistling. Vasilisa followed her and (*forest sounds fade out*) everything closed up behind her.

Once inside, Baba Yaga stretched out on a chair and said to Vasilisa, “Serve me what's in the stove. I'm hungry.”

Vasilisa began to serve Baba Yaga everything she found. There was enough food to feed ten strong knights. Baba Yaga ate and drank everything—leaving Vasilisa only a little cabbage soup, a crust of bread, and a piece of pork.

“Tomorrow, you must sweep the yard, clean the hut, wash the linen and cook a fine supper. Then go to the corn bin and separate the wheat from the chaff. If everything is not done, I will eat you up!”

With this warning, the skinny old creature stretch out her long legs—her body stretch from one corner of the cabin to the other—and promptly fell asleep. (*Storyteller snores so that her whole body shakes.*) Vasilisa took a deep breath (*pause*) and pulled her doll out. She set the soup, bread, and scrap of meat before the doll, “Little doll, how am I ever to do all of this for the old witch? The tasks are impossible and she threatens to eat me!”

“Do not worry. Eat your supper. Get some rest. You have a long day ahead of you. Mornings are wiser then evenings.”

And with that Vasilisa put her head down and slept. She awoke (*Sound of horse galloping*) as day broke and the red horseman quickly followed the white one across the sky. Baba Yaga followed the horsemen in her mortar and pestle. Vasilisa scanned the room to see where to begin. To her surprise, the doll was almost finished completing the tasks herself! She was sweeping the floors (*Storyteller motions for audience to join her and swipe hands together to make the sound of sweeping*) washing the dishes (*hands rub*

together to make the sound of scrubbing) and chopping the firewood. (*hands clap on legs to make the sound of chopping wood*) All that was left for Vasilisa to do was cook. And cook she did. She made cream cheese pastries, hot sauerkraut soup, golden bread filled with savory onions and mushrooms, salmon and rice, blinis in butter, and many more dishes besides. It was a feast fit for a tzar.

Baba Yaga came home after the sun had set. She was highly disappointed to discover that all the tasks were done and done well. Grumbling to herself, Baba Yaga sat and scarfed down the entire feast.

“Tomorrow you must do the same as today. Then go into the storeroom and sort through the poppy seeds. Someone threw dirt on them, out of spite. Clean each of my poppies so that they shine. And I expect as good a supper as this one; or I shall eat you instead.” And she filled the cabin with her loud snores.

“Little doll, what shall I do?” Vasilisa whispered as she fed the doll scrapes she’d managed to save.

As always the doll comforted her, “The day is wiser than the night. Sleep tight Vasilisa.”

When she awoke, the doll was finishing polishing the last poppy. Cheerfully, Vasilisa got up and began to cook so that the cabin was filled with delicious smells.

Baba Yaga returned in the evening and again found nothing amiss. The witch then ate her massive supper. When she finished, she leaned back in her chair, lit a pipe, and inspected Vasilisa. “Why don’t you speak? Anyone would think you were mute.”

“If it’s alright, I’d like to ask you something.”

“Go ahead, but remember not every question has a good answer. And the more you know, the sooner you grow old.”

“Grandmother, who are the horses and riders I saw passing by? One is white, the next red, and the third black.”

“They are my faithful horsemen. The white one is my bright day. The red is my red sun. And the last one, is my dark night.”

(The storyteller then addresses the audience) “Do you have any questions for Baba Yaga?” *(She answers their questions as Baba Yaga and takes as many as time will allow.)*

“Don’t you want to ask me something else?”

“Grandmother, you told me that the more I know the faster I grow old.”

Baba Yaga smiled, showing her pointy sharp teeth, “you were smart not to ask about anything in this house. I do not like to have my dirty linen washed in public. And

I eat the over curious. Now, I get to ask you a question. How is it that you were able to complete all the tasks?”

Vasilisa thought hard. She knew better than to tell Baba Yaga about the doll. But it would be foolish to lie. “By my mother’s love.” She finally answered.

Baba Yaga jumped up, “Love!” she spat out the word. “Oh is that it! Get you gone. I don’t want anyone blessed by love in this house.” She dragged Vasilisa out of the cabin. Baba Yaga, you see, cannot stand love. And has no power over those who are good and brave because of it.

“Where are you going so fast? Don’t forget what you came for.” Baba Yaga barked.

Vasilisa turned back. The old creature took one of the illuminated skulls off the gate, put it on a wooden stick, and gave it to Vasilisa, “Be sure to give this directly to your stepmother and stepsisters.”

“Yes grandmother. Thank you.” Vasilisa hurried away. *(Storyteller motions for the audience to get up and follow her through the woods again) (Forest sounds—owls, wolves, wind, and soundscape)*

She walked all night guided by the light of the skull. *(Sound of horse galloping)*
The white horseman rode across her path. Dawn had broken. *(Sound of horse galloping)*

Followed by the red. The sun had risen. She walked (*Sound of horse galloping*) through the day until the black horseman rode by. Night had fallen.

Vasilisa finally arrived at her stepmother's house. (*The storyteller stops and motions for the audience to gather around her so they are able to see the door of the stepmother's house but not to go in.*) It was late at night. Not wanting to wake them, she set the skull down outside. The skull protested, (*the skull's voice is recorded*) "What are you doing Vasilisa? Baba Yaga intended for you to give me directly to your stepmother and stepsisters."

And so Vasilisa walked into the house holding the illuminated skull. (*The storyteller holds the skull inside the door but does not go in herself.*) She found her stepfamily sitting up waiting for her. The stepmother's spell had worked only too well. They had not been able to strike a light since Vasilisa had left! The three women rushed to her in joy—happy to see her for the first time in their lives. (*Fog begins*) But suddenly they turned away in horror! (*Sound of cracking fire*) The skull's eyes blazed with red-hot embers. The eyes sought out the stepmother and engulfed her in flames. The stepsisters shrieked and ran. But the eyes found each of them and reduced them to ashes. (*Fog stops and the Storyteller drops the skull and shuts the door firmly.*) Vasilisa dropped the skull in horror, and left the house forever.

She found her way into town. (*The Storyteller walks to the Widow's house motioning for the audience to follow her. She parts the curtains and invites the audience inside.*) A kind old Widow took her in.

She lived with her for many years. One day she thought to make a gift for the widow to thank her. She made a cloth so fine it could pass through the eye of a needle. The Widow upon seeing the fabric knew that the fabric was only fit for royalty.

She took the fabric to the palace where the Tzar lived. When he saw cloth as fine as this, he knew that his tailors weren't fit to make shirts from it, so he asked the Widow to make shirts.

"Little father Tzar I did not make this fabric it was my adopted daughter, Vasilisa."

And he knew right away he had to meet her. With that he took the fabric and went to Vasilisa.

Meanwhile, Vasilisa had arranged flowers to hear tales of the Tzar from the Widow when she returned. Upon meeting Vasilisa, he fell in love with her and asked if she would be his wife. Vasilisa agreed and they were soon married. As a wedding gift the Tzar found Vasilisa's father, the merchant, and brought him to live at the palace with Vasilisa and the Widow

The kind woman, Vasilisa, now had everything her heart desired. No longer did she have to suffer. But she always carried the doll in her pocket. The doll remained her dear little friend and magical confidant. And constant reminder of her mother's love.

The end.

WORKSHOP PLAN #1

Friday, September 26, 2014

Goals:

To introduce ourselves and the project to the class

To explain research forms to the class and complete IRB paperwork

Materials:

Blank paper for drawing

Crayons

Research forms

9:05-9:30am

Introduction:

Hi Everyone. Thank you for having us in your classroom today. Rachel and I are excited to get to know you today. We are going to be in your classroom five more times doing some drama and art activities with you.

We will be exploring a fairy tale together called, Baba Yaga and Vasilisa. Rachel and I are making this story into a performance for kids like you and families to come see. We are hoping you'll help us out with making it. This performance will be for kids, but Rachel and I aren't kids anymore, so we need your help. We want to know what you think about this story that we'll be playing with together.

What is Theatre?

If you have ever heard the word theatre before, put your hand on your head.

If you have ever seen a play, put your hand on your head.

If you have ever been in a play, put your hand on your head.

Meredyth will ask students about the plays they've seen, or what they know about the word, "theatre" and explain that theatre is a performance with real, live people right in front of you – no movie screens!

Research

We are doing research about how we make this performance. When you research something it means you learn more about it and ask a lot of questions. We would love to use your great ideas, your drawings and photos of drama activities that we're doing together as part of our research.

Just like you have to ask adults permission for things sometimes, it's the rule that we ask you for your permission to write about you in our research.

Today we want to know from each of you if it's okay to include the things you make in our workshops in our research. You get to choose yes or no, if it's okay for us to ask you some questions about your drawings and take pictures of our work together. If you don't want to, you don't have to, and that is totally okay. You still get to do all the fun activities with us even if you don't want to be in the research. You can also change your mind later on, and that is okay too.

When researchers write about people, sometimes they will give the people a fake name so no one can tell who they are writing about. When we ask you if it's okay to write about you, we also want to know if you want us to write about you using your real first name or a fake first time. You get to decide.

Drawing Activity: The _____ Forest

In a moment, Rachel and I will come around to ask each of you if it's okay with you if write about what you and do and say during our workshops together. But before we get started, we have a drawing activity for you to do.

Each student will draw a forest and title it: The _____ Forest.

What kind of forest will you draw? Will you draw a spooky forest? A candy forest? A purple forest? You get to decide. Make sure you give your forest a title by filling in the blank.

As students draw, Meredyth and Rachel will each take some research forms and ask each student:

Is it okay with you if we write about what you do and say in our workshop together?

When we write about you, do you want us to use your real first name or a fake first name?

WORKSHOP PLAN #2

Tuesday, September 30, 2014

Goals:

To share the story of Baba Yaga and Vasilisa with the class.

To gather initial impressions from young people about the story.

To learn about which moments/images from the story stand out to young people.

Materials:

Blank paper for drawing

Crayons

9:40-10:10am

Check-In

One thing theatre artists do when we start rehearsal with each other is to check in so we can see how everyone is feeling today. It's important to know how other people are feeling when we are working together.

Everyone show me with your thumbs where you are today: thumbs up for super awesome, thumbs down for not super awesome, or you can put your thumb anywhere in between if you're kind of in the middle. One, two, three, thumbs!

Keep your thumbs in front of you and look to see where everyone is. Great. You can put your thumbs down.

Share the Story

Meredyth will tell/share the story of Baba Yaga and Vasilisa with the class.

Think, Pair, Share

Imagine you are telling someone at home about this story. What would you tell them it was about? Think about it, then turn to a partner to tell them what you think this story is about.

After a few minutes, ask for a few people to share what they talked about with their partner.

Drawing Activity: What do you remember most?

What do you remember the most? You might draw your favorite part, a character you remember or a picture you made in your head as you listened to the story.

After they've gotten started on drawing, Meredyth and Rachel will check in with individual students as they draw and ask them:

Tell me about your drawing.

How did that moment in the story make you feel?

Why did you choose this moment to draw?

WORKSHOP PLAN #3

Tuesday, October 7, 2014

Goals:

To find out how our young collaborators describe and imagine the environments and places in this story.

Materials:

Blank paper for drawing

Crayons and markers

9:45-10:25am

Check-In

5 mins

One thing theatre artists do when we start rehearsal with each other is to check in so we can see how everyone is feeling today. It's important to know how other people are feeling when we are working together.

Everyone show me with your thumbs where you are today: thumbs up for super awesome, thumbs down for not super awesome, or you can put your thumb anywhere in between if you're kind of in the middle. One, two, three, thumbs!

Keep your thumbs in front of you and look to see where everyone is. Great. You can put your thumbs down.

Today's rehearsal focus: environments in the story. What is an environment?

Frozen Pictures: Environments

15 mins

Today we're going to make some pictures with our bodies of what the places in this story look like. Let's practice with a place we know well – let's make a picture of your school playground since Rachel and I have never seen it.

Meredyth facilitates creating a group frozen image of the playground as one student at a time adds something to the picture by making the shape of it with their body.

After the playground: create Baba Yaga's house. What are the most important parts we need to include? What do you imagine those parts look like?

Soundscape Hallway

15 mins

Form two seated lines facing each other. Another way to create an environment is through sounds. What are some of the sounds that Vasilisa might hear in the forest as she travels to Baba Yaga's house?

When I tap you on the shoulder, you'll choose a sound to make and start making your sound. It's okay if people do the same sound, but let's try to have as many different ones as we can think of. When I tap your shoulder a second time, that's when your sound will turn off.

Practice building the soundscape this way – and record it!

Now we have a chance for someone to walk through the forest sounds to hear what Vasilisa might hear. We have enough time for three people to get a turn to do this.

Reflection

5 mins

What do you remember most about the forest?

How do you think Vasilisa felt as she walked through the forest to Baba Yaga's house? Why?

WORKSHOP PLAN #4

Tuesday, October 14, 2014

Goals:

To find out how our young collaborators describe and imagine the characters of Baba Yaga and Vasilisa.

Materials:

Costume pieces for Baba Yaga and Vasilisa

9:45-10:25am

Check-In/Intro

5 mins

One thing theatre artists do when we start rehearsal with each other is to check in so we can see how everyone is feeling today. It's important to know how other people are feeling when we are working together.

Everyone show me with your thumbs where you are today: thumbs up for super awesome, thumbs down for not super awesome, or you can put your thumb anywhere in between if you're kind of in the middle. One, two, three, thumbs!

Keep your thumbs in front of you and look to see where everyone is. Great. You can put your thumbs down.

Today's rehearsal focus: Vasilisa and Baba Yaga. We are going to put on our costume designer hats today, and the first step is to figure out what we know about these characters from what we heard in the story and our own imaginations.

Role on the Wall: Vasilisa

10 mins

Meredyth will draw an outline on the board of a person – Vasilisa. On the outside, ask the group to brainstorm important things we know about Vasilisa: what has happened in her life? Who are the people in her life? What do people in her life say about her?

On the inside of the outline, brainstorm how Vasilisa feels on the inside. Draw connections from the outside comments/events/people to the feelings inside.

Character Dress Up and Movement

10

mins

Meredyth will show the students the clothing pieces we brought, and facilitate the group choosing pieces they think Vasilisa would wear. Based on what we brainstormed about Vasilisa, what kinds of clothing would she wear? Ask youth to explain their choices of clothing pieces.

How do you think Vasilisa would move? Slowly or quickly? Heavy steps or light steps? WHY?

Next, we'll dress Rachel up as Baba Yaga. What would Baba Yaga wear, and why?

How would Baba Yaga move? Slowly or quickly? Heavy steps or light? WHY?

Reflection

5 mins

How would YOU describe Vasilisa? What about Baba Yaga?

**Additional activity if time: turn our reflection discussion into a drawing exercise. Choose a character (Vasilisa or Baba Yaga) to draw and write three words that describe that character on your paper.

WORKSHOP PLAN #5

Tuesday, October 21, 2014

Goal: To find out how our young collaborators describe and imagine the inside of Baba Yaga and Vasilisa's houses.

Materials:

Paper and drawing materials

9:45-10:25am

Check-In/Intro

5 mins

One thing theatre artists do when we start rehearsal with each other is to check in so we can see how everyone is feeling today. It's important to know how other people are feeling when we are working together.

Everyone show me with your thumbs where you are today: thumbs up for super awesome, thumbs down for not super awesome, or you can put your thumb anywhere in between if you're kind of in the middle. One, two, three, thumbs!

Keep your thumbs in front of you and look to see where everyone is. Great. You can put your thumbs down.

Today's rehearsal focus: Last week we got to put on our costume designer hats, and this week are going to think like set designers. The set designer for our production is here today, and he's excited to learn about what you think some of the settings in our story look like.

Setting Brainstorm

15 mins

Today we're going to think about the inside of Baba Yaga's house, and the inside of Vasilisa's house. Let's start with Vasilisa's home where she lives with her stepfamily.

Meredyth will draw an outline of a house on the board. What actions or events in the story happen in this house? Scribe responses on the board inside the house outline.

What words would you use to describe this place? Write responses on the outside of the house.

Repeat this process for the inside of Baba Yaga's house.

Drawing Activity

15 mins

Now that we've brainstormed all the things we know about these two places, our next step is to draw our ideas. We need some people to draw the inside of Vasilisa's house and some people to draw the inside of Baba Yaga's. Think for a minute about which one you would like to do. Raise your hand if you are going to draw Vasilisa's house. Make sure we have multiple artists working on each setting, and get started!

WORKSHOP PLAN #6

Tuesday, October 22, 2014

Goal: To find out how our young collaborators imagine light and talk about our perception of colors.

Materials:

Construction Paper and drawing materials

2 LED Par Lights

2 Extension Cords

M&Ms

9:45-10:25am

Check-In/Intro

5 mins

One thing theatre artists do when we start rehearsal with each other is to check in so we can see how everyone is feeling today. It's important to know how other people are feeling when we are working together.

Everyone show me with your thumbs where you are today: thumbs up for super awesome, thumbs down for not super awesome, or you can put your thumb anywhere in between if you're kind of in the middle. One, two, three, thumbs!

Keep your thumbs in front of you and look to see where everyone is. Great. You can put your thumbs down.

Today's rehearsal focus: Last week we got to put on our scenic designer hats, and this week are going to think like lighting designers. Rachel is the lighting designer for our production.

Setting Brainstorm

10 mins

Today we're going to think about how light makes us feel. As we think about how we feel we are going to make frozen statues in our chairs using our faces.

How does a sunny day make you feel? And how about a rainy day?

How do you feel at night? Why do you think it's scary?

Rachel will write the words down on the board and take pictures.

What about color?

M&M Activity

15 mins

We are now going to split into two groups and look at how colored light changes how we see other colors.

Rachel & Meredyth will place a bunch of colored M&Ms on 2 plates and shine LED lights over them.

Red LED light: How does the red light make you feel? I need a volunteer to separate the M&Ms by color.

Green LED light: How does the green light make you feel? I need a volunteer to separate the M&Ms by color.

Blue LED light: How does the blue light make you feel? I need a volunteer to separate the M&Ms by color.

See how color changes our perceptions. And now if we shine all the colors together we get white light.

Drawing Activity

15 mins

Now that we've brainstormed let's draw a picture of our favorite places in the story paying attention to the light that is in those places. We have the forest, Baba Yaga's house, the Stepmother's House, and the Palace. I have special paper for you to help draw the light. Think for a minute about which one you would like to do.

Mini-Reflection

Go around in a circle and each person says one word that is the most important thing they would want people to know about the story.

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